

THE WORKS

Of the MOST REVEREND
Dr. EDWARD SYNGE,
Late Lord Archbishop of *Tuam* in *Ireland.*

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING.

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posed Persons as buy Numbers of each to give
away.



RELIGION

Tryed by the

T E S T

O F

SOBER and IMPARTIAL

REASON.

By the most Reverend

Dr. EDWARD SYNGE,

Late Lord Archbishop of Tuam in Ireland.

AUTHOR of an *Answer to all the EXCUSES
and PRETENCES which Men ordinarily
make for their not coming to the HOLY-
COMMUNION, &c.*

THE SECOND EDITION,

Corrected and Enlarged.

L O N D O N:

Printed for *Thomas Trye, near Gray's-Inn-
Gate in Holbourn.*

M,DCC,XLII.

RELIGION

As it is

THE

OF

SOBER AND IMPARTIAL

RECORD



AND

OF THE
RELIGIOUS
AND
MORAL
TEACHINGS
OF THE
HUMAN
MIND
IN
ALL
AGES
AND
COUNTRIES
OF THE
EAST
AND
WEST

THE

OF

Printed for the
British Museum
in the
Year
1800



TO THE

Most Reverend Father in God,

W I L L I A M,

By Divine Providence,

*Lord Archbishop of Dublin, Pri-
mate and Metropolitam of Ire-
land.*

MY LORD,

W HOSOEVER with any hope o
Success would contribute to the
Cure of a Malady, whether of
Body or Mind, must not only consider the
natural Force and Virtue of the Medicine he
prepares for it, but also have a special regard
to the Constitution and Disposition of the Pa-
tient for whom he intends it. For however
a Remedy may appear in itself to be well
adapted to the Disease, yet if the sick Man
either is not able to take it, or has not Strength
sufficient to retain and digest it, it is not pos-

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sible that it should avail any Thing towards his Recovery.

How epidemical the Disease, not only of *Heterodoxy* but even *Infidelity*, is become amongst us, may indeed, and ought, by every good Man to be lamented; but is too plain to be either denied or dissembled: In Opposition to both which, though many excellent Books of all sorts have been written in our own Language, and some of them with the greatest Learning and Judgment; yet because many still pretend (and some of them perhaps truly) that they have not time to read large Volumes, or want Capacity to digest those that are a little more than ordinarily learned, I have ever looked upon it as a very useful Work (and much to be approved of in those who at any time have attempted it) to contract the most material Arguments that are urged in Defence of the true Religion, or any part of it; and to bring them within as narrow a compass, as may be consistent with both that Strength and Clearness, which we always suppose necessary in order to their prevailing upon the Minds of Men.

Something of this nature I have thought it my Duty, more than once, to endeavour from the Pulpit: And what I had so done, having met with some small Approbation from divers Persons of Candour and Judgment; when your Grace was pleased to lay your Commands upon me to perform, in my turn, the Office
of

D E D I C A T I O N. v

of a Preacher at your ordinary Visitation, I thought I could not do a thing more acceptable to my Brethren of the Clergy, or at least the younger of them, than thus at one View to bring to their Remembrance the main and most fundamental Points of our Religion, (to which we ought all of us constantly to have an Eye in the whole Course of our Ministry) together with some of the chief Reasons and Arguments, whereby we maintain and defend them against the several sorts of Adversaries with whom we have to do.

I therefore carefully recollected what I had to this Purpose formerly studied and digested: And after I had comprised the most material part of it in an Hour's Discourse, I began to entertain a Resolution of making the whole more public; in hopes that, through the Blessing of God, it might from the Press have as good an Effect as, I was assured, it formerly had had upon some from the Pulpit.

In order hereunto, I communicated what I had written to several of the most judicious of my Friends; who were pleased not only not to disapprove of my Design, but also to suggest some Things to me, for the farther and better Prosecution of the most *necessary Part* of what I had undertaken; I mean, that which was most directly levelled against *Atheism* and *Infidelity*: And this is the Reason why I have now more largely insisted on the *Truth and Necessity of Revealed Religion*, than what

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at first I intended; or may seem proportionable to the other Branches of the Discourse.

Having thus troubled your Grace with an Account of the Rise and Progress of this small Work, I humbly beg leave to prefix your Name before it; not only as an Acknowledgment of my being immediately accountable to your Jurisdiction for whatever Doctrine I teach, or other ministerial Act I perform, within your Diocese, (which, antecedent to the Laws of the Land, I take to be a Consequence from the *Divine Institution of Episcopacy*) but also as a public Testimony of that sincere Honour and Reverence, which your Grace has a just Title to from every one, I think, who has a true Value for either our Religious or Civil Constitution.

It is an unjust Reflection which some Men affect to make upon all Dedications of this sort, almost without any Distinction; That for a Man to speak well of the Patron he has made Choice of, is, in their Opinion, little else but Flattery. But the Reason why the Life of a good Man is by all allowed to be written and published after his Death, will, I think, hold also as well for the giving him his due Character even while he is alive: I mean, that it may be an Incitement to others to follow his Example: And provided a Man says no more than what is true; to condemn him of any secret or sinister Design therein, is to assume the Place of God himself,

D E D I C A T I O N. vii

self, in passing Judgment upon the private Thoughts of the Heart, which are only known unto him who is both the Maker and Searcher of it.

Had I a Design of writing a Panegyrick on your Grace, I am sure there is very sufficient Matter for it. The Strictness of your Life, yet without Moroseness or Sourness of Temper, all along from your Youth; your great Knowledge in all the useful Parts of Learning, notwithstanding the almost constant Interruption of your Studies, which for above these thirty Years past has unavoidably attended you; your great Labour and Diligence in the *personal* Discharge of your Cure, while you were a Parish-Minister; your frequent and vigorous appearing in behalf of our Church and Religion, against Enemies of all Sorts; and more particularly at the Time when it was thought most dangerous so to do; [*Anno* 1687.] your unwearied Care and Vigilance in settling the Affairs of that Diocese unto which you were most deservedly promoted, after the late Times of Confusion; your more than ordinary Caution in admitting no Man to Holy Orders, or a Cure of Souls, until by a strict Examination he appears to be sufficiently qualified, both as to his Life and Learning; your narrow Inspection into the Behaviour of all your Clergy; and as far as it is possible, into every Thing under your Charge within your Diocese and Province;

your

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your Patience in hearkening to every Man that has any reasonable Cause of applying to you ; your Readiness, as you have Opportunity, to encourage every Man who honestly endeavours to perform his Duty ; your great Temper, as upon all other Occasions, so particularly in disregarding the rude Behaviour of those who seem to lay hold on any Opportunity to provoke you ; the Mildness as well as Weight of your Reproofs to those that offend ; your Readiness to pardon every Man that conscientiously returns to his Duty ; and Resolution in punishing (to your Power) those who obstinately persist in the Breach of it ; your Hospitality, Liberality, Charity ; and (that I may not run out into numberless Particulars) your constant Adherence to the true Interest of Church and State ; and Courage upon all Occasions to discharge a good Conscience, without any regard to the Passions of Men, or the Humour of this or that Party ; all this, I say, and more that might be reckoned up, would be a Subject ample enough to enlarge upon, had I the Vanity to think that any thing I can say, would in the least contribute to make your Grace better known than you already are to all good Men amongst us.

If I do not offend your Grace in thus making public mention of these Things, I am persuaded that no other *good Man* will in the least find Fault with me for it ; and for the *uncharitable Part* of the World, I hope I have
learn'd

DEDICATION. ix

learn'd so much from your Grace's Example,
as not to regard their Censures. I am, with all
Respect and Duty,

Your GRACE'S

Most Obedient

And Humble Servant,

Edw. Synge.

T H E

NOTATION
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P R E F A C E.

I*T is a melancholy Reflection, that many Men affect to treat Religion, and the Persons who are the immediate Officers of it, with more Spite and Ill-nature than they do any other thing whatsoever. For Example, that many unnecessary Curiosities have been brought in, to the clogging and perplexing both of Law and Physick; and that there have been not a few unfair and corrupt Practitioners in both those Faculties, is what honest and sober Physicians and Lawyers, as well as other Men, have often complain'd of; yet no Man has hitherto been so wild as to insinuate from hence that therefore both these noble Professions should be (not only amended and reformed, but) wholly exploded and laid aside. And altho' there have been Multitudes of Pettyfoggers and Empiricks in all Ages, yet still there is no Man but believes that there are, or at least may be, many very honest Lawyers and Physicians in the World.*

But

But with respect to Religion, and the Ministers of it, there is a Party of Men who endeavour to suggest another way of reasoning; and because it is not deny'd but that there have been many false Religions brought into the World, therefore they will allow none to be true. Because we own that the true Religion has in divers Places and Ages been corrupted, (partly by Ignorance and partly by the Craft of designing Men) therefore they will allow no Part of it to be genuine and sound: And because it is not contested but that there have been many ambitious and wicked Men, who for evil and worldly Ends have thrust themselves into the Offices of the true as well as false Religions, therefore under the Name of Priests (whom without distinction they render as odious as may be) they endeavour to explode and wholly lay aside the very Office of the Ministry; altho' for Fashion-sake, they would sometimes seem to allow that there is some little Truth in Religion: And hence it has come to pass that Christianity has been industriously drest up in a Fool's Coat, and treated as if it were no better than a Fable or idle Tale; that Priests of all Religions without any Distinction have been pronounced to be the same, and the Sentence received with the Applause of many; and all manner of Distinction between those who are to minister in the Offices of Religion, and the People who are to receive the Benefit of such Ministry, by some has been represented as nothing more than

than

than a Design of crafty Men to gain to themselves a Dominion over the Consciences of others.

But how contrary is this way of arguing to that Clearness and Strength of Reason, which these Men seem so much to admire and stand up for? Put the Case that ninety and nine parts of an hundred of all the Lawyers and Physicians in the World should prove Fools or Knaves, would this be a good Reason why any Man should wholly reject either Law or Physick, and refuse to hearken to, or make the least use of a sober and honest Man of either Profession, where his Health and Estate were concerned? And if there had been more Knavery among the Priests than even they who aggravate those things beyond Measure do pretend; would it follow from hence that therefore the Office of the Ministry itself is only a Cheat, and Religion no better than a Fiction? Certainly they who think freely ought always to judge of Matters, by the Reason of things, and not by the real or pretended corrupt Practices of any Set or Order of Men: And upon this Issue I have endeavoured in the following Discourse entirely to put the Cause of Religion.

My Design being to offer unto others the same full and clear Conviction which, I bless God, I have in my own Mind about the things I write of; wherever I have had Occasion to propose a Difficulty, I have not in the least endeavour'd to conceal the Strength of it:

And altho' I think I have given a sufficient and satisfactory Answer to every Objection that has come in my way, yet because it is possible that my Words may not always fully convey the utmost of my Thoughts to the Mind of my Reader ; I have only this Request to make to him, that upon all such Occasions as those, he would endeavour to supply whatever Defects he finds me to have been guilty of, and consider not only what I have said, but also what farther might, if necessary, be offered upon each Subject. And if what I here write has but so far an Effect upon him as to put him upon a sober and impartial Enquiry after farther and better Satisfaction than what he thinks I have been able to give him; I shall look on my pains to be very well bestowed.

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T H E



T H E C O N T E N T S.

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SECT.

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RELIGION

TRYED BY THE

TEST of REASON.

§. I. **M**Y Intention in the following Discourse being with what Brevity and Plainness I can, to bring *Christianity*, as it is professed in the *Established Church*, to a fair and equal, yet strict and impartial Tryal at the Bar of *Reason*: For the more clear and methodical proceeding herein, I know no better way than to take my Beginning and Rule of Direction in this whole Affair, from those remarkable Words of the blessed Apostle St. *Peter*; which ought, I think, to make a deep Impression upon the Mind of every one who reads or hears them; 1 *Pet.* iii. 15. *Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you, with Meekness and Fear.* And before I come to draw any thing from the Words themselves, it will not be amiss to give a short Account of the Occasion of them, and their Connection with the rest of the Chapter.

At

At the tenth Verse of this Chapter, St. *Peter* assures us that the best and most certain way for a Man to live with Safety and Security to himself, even in this World, is to be truly virtuous and religious: *He that will love Life and see good Days, let him refrain his Tongue from evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile; let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek Peace and ensue it.*

For the Confirmation of this Truth, he offers two Reasons: The first in the twelfth Verse; namely, that good Men are in the Favour, and consequently, under the immediate Protection of Almighty God; while the Wicked are exposed, even in this Life, to his Wrath and Vengeance: For (says he) *the Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Prayers: But the Face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

The other Reason (contain'd in the thirteenth Verse) is drawn from that Temper and Disposition which even naturally prevails in Mankind, if it be not perverted by evil Principles, or Passion; that is to say, not to hurt, or injure those, who are so far from giving them any just Provocation, that on the contrary, they are ready, upon all Occasions, by kind and charitable Offices, to engage and win the Love and Good-will of all that they converse with. *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good?* As if he had said in other Words, If those Men amongst whom you live, however of a different Perswasion from you in Religion, do always by Experience find that your Behaviour is inoffensive, and that Truth, Justice, and Charity do constantly prevail with you, and have a never-failing Influence upon all your Actions; what Man amongst them is there, or can there be, who, if he be-guided but
by

by the common Principles of Reason and Prudence, will ever offer to do you any Hurt, when thereby it is evident that he can derive no real Benefit or Advantage to himself? *When a Man's Ways do thus please the Lord*, he may have a probable Expectation, even by the Rules of Reason as well as those of Religion, that *his Enemies*, if they are not altogether irrational in their Proceedings, will become so far reconcil'd, as at least to *be at peace with him*, Prov. xvi. 7.

But when it is considered how much the greatest part of Mankind are overswayed and governed by their Passions and Prejudices, in direct Opposition, very often, both to Reason and Religion; the Consequence from hence must needs (sometimes at least) be, that the more careful and exact a Man is in the Performance of his Duty, the more certainly may he expect to be hated and persecuted by some sort of Men for it.

In order, therefore, to arm and prepare all Christians for such Hatred and Persecution, as God in his Providence, for their better Tryal, sometimes suffers to befall them; the Apostle proceeds to recommend unto them the three following Qualifications. *First*, That they be courageous and resolute; in the fourteenth Verse, *But and if ye suffer for Righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their Terror, neither be troubled.* *Secondly*, That they be inwardly and sincerely pious and holy; in the former part of the fifteenth Verse, *But sanctify* (says he) *the Lord God in your Hearts.* And *Thirdly*, That they be well instructed and grounded in that Religion which they profess; in the Words of my Text, (for so I may have leave to call that Passage of Holy Scripture which I have chosen for the Ground-work of my whole Discourse) *Be ready always to give an Answer*

to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you, with Meekness and Fear.

To ask a Man a Reason of the Hope that is in him, signifies here, neither more nor less than in other Terms to demand why he is of such a Religion; and upon what Ground he expects to be saved by it. And the Word *Fear* I take, in this place, to be put not to signify the Fear of God, (altho' it may well enough be understood in that Sense also) and much less the Fear of suffering for Religion, or a good Conscience, (which St. Peter had just before forbid in the fourteenth Verse, as our Saviour also has expressly done, *Matt. x. 28.*) but rather to be added as a farther Explication of the Word *Meekness*; and to denote a Fear or Caution of offending or exasperating the Person, or Persons, who at any time shall put such Questions or Demands to us, as my Text requires us to return an Answer to.

§. II. From the Words thus opened and explained, we may fairly draw these four Propositions.

First, That every Man ought to have some Reason for his being of that Religion which he professes. For how could it be possible for a Man to give an Answer to him that asks him a Reason of his Religion, if he has not first some Reason for it himself?

Secondly, That the Reason upon which a Man grounds his Religion ought to be such, as not only satisfies himself, but also may be fit and proper to convince any other Person, who duly and impartially weighs and considers it. For it would be to no manner of Purpose to offer any Reason for Religion (or indeed for any thing whatsoever) if the Reason so offered were not proper, in its own Nature, for the Conviction of such as should hearken to it.

Thirdly,

SECT. III. *by the Test of REASON.* 21

Thirdly, That every Man when he is thereunto duly called and required, should be ready freely to give the Reason for his being of such a Religion, unto any one that demands it from him: Or (in the Words of my Text) to give an Answer to every one who asketh a Reason of the Hope that is in him, as the Apostle here directs.

And Fourthly and lastly, That this Reason ought always to be given in so mild and meek a manner, as may not tend to exasperate, or give any just Ground of Offence unto any one that tasks it: Or with Meekness and Fear, as my Text expresses it.

That these four Propositions are contained in the Text, and justly raised from it, I take to be sufficiently plain; I proceed now to offer what may be necessary for the farther Confirmation of each of them in the order they lie; and then from the whole, shall endeavour to draw such Inferences, as appear to be most proper and useful.

§. III. First then, that *every Man ought to have some Reason for his being of that Religion which he professes.* Nor is this any more than what is required from us in divers places of the Holy Scriptures. St. Paul directs us first to *prove all things, and then to hold fast that which is good,* 1 Thes. v. 21. St. John gives us a Caution that we should *not believe every Spirit;* but make use of our Understanding, and whatever Helps God has furnished us with, to *try the Spirits whether they are of God,* 1 John iv. 1. The Men of Berea are approved of and commended, for *searching the Scriptures of the Old Testament, (whose Authority they had before upon good Grounds received) whether those things which St. Paul taught were so,* Acts xviii. 28. The same Apostle appeals to the common Reason of Man, when he says, *I speak as to wise Men, judge*
ye

ye what I say, 1 Cor. x. 15. And even our Saviour himself sufficiently intimates, that every Man's own Judgment, upon the best Information he can get, must be to him the immediate Ground and Rule of his Religion; when he condescends to submit even his own Mission and Doctrine to this Tryal: *Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?* says he, *Luke xii. 57.*

To these Passages of Holy Scripture many more, if occasion were, might be added; which, tho' not all of them so directly and expressly, yet by the clearest and best Consequence, do confirm and illustrate the Truth of this first Proposition. But, if we have recourse to the Reason of the thing, it will set the Matter in a most clear Light, and demonstrate, beyond Exception, the Folly of that Man who takes his Religion upon Trust, or without such Proof as may be sufficient to convince and satisfy his own Mind of the Truth of it.

In all Matters of great and serious Consequence, no Man of common Prudence will proceed to act blindly and at random; but will always, to the best of his Power, first enquire into the Ground and Reason of what he is to do, before he ventures upon it. He that should buy or sell an Estate, build or pull down his House, or change his Habitation from one Place or Country to another, and not know why or for what Reason he does any of these things, would by all be looked upon as guilty of very great Folly, because upon such things as these the Comfort and Satisfaction of this present Life is supposed in a very great measure to depend: But what can be of greater, or so great Moment and Consequence to us, as Religion? upon which altogether depends the Favour of God,
the

Sect. IV. *by the Test of* REASON. 23

the Peace of our Conscience, and our eternal Welfare or Misery never to be retrieved. If then even in the Affairs of this World, which are but of an inferior Concern to us, we always think it necessary to weigh our Actions, and have a Reason for them, before we venture upon Matters that are of any Importance; much more certainly ought we to do the same in the Case of Religion, the Concern whereof is no less than eternal.

Farthermore, it is a Principle universally maintained, if not by all the World, yet at least by all such as profess Christianity; that if God, in the Course of his Providence, calls a Man thereunto, he ought readily to suffer any Persecution or Torment for the sake of his Religion, and undergo even Death itself, if there be occasion, rather than renounce or deny it: But he that should suffer all this, and yet not know why or wherefore he did so, whatever Opinion we might have of his Courage, it is certain we ought to have but very little of his Wisdom; and where a Man has no sufficient Reason for his Religion, it is not possible he should have any such for his suffering for it.

If then, in a Business of the greatest Concern, we ought by no means to act blindly and by chance, not knowing whether we are in the right or the wrong; and if upon occasion we would not suffer, like Fools, we know not why, it is no less than necessary that *every one of us should have some good Reason for the Religion we profess*; which was my first Proposition.

§. IV. I proceed to the second, which was, That *the Reason upon which a Man grounds his Religion, ought to be such, as not only satisfies himself, but also may be fit and proper to convince any other*

other Person who duly and impartially weighs and considers it.

If Religion were intended by God for a Secret of which when a Man had gotten the Knowledge, he were to keep it to himself, and communicate it to no other Person; then indeed, if he were once in his own Mind and Understanding sufficiently satisfied about it, it were no matter whether his Reasons were known or not known to the rest of the World; or what other Men did or might think of them: But the Case of Religion is quite otherwise; in which as all Men are universally concerned; so is it the Design and Command of God, that it should every where be publickly taught and propagated amongst all Mankind; that every Man who will but give impartial Attention to it, may come to the Knowledge, and embrace the Profession of it: For which end, as the Apostles of Christ were sent abroad with Commission and a Command to *preach the Gospel to every Creature*, Mark xvi. 15. so has God appointed a perpetual Order of Ministers in the Church, for the constant carrying on of the same Work, to the end of the World, wherever they can gain Admittance; besides, the Obligation that lies upon Parents to *bring up their Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*, Eph. vi. 4. that is to say, both in the Knowledge and Practice of Religion; and upon all Christians whatsoever to *edify*, 1 Thess. v. 11. that is, in private Conversation, to instruct, admonish, and persuade *one another*, according to their several Abilities and Opportunities: But if the Reasons, upon which Religion is grounded, are not fit and proper in their Nature, to convince and satisfy every Man, who without Prepossession or Prejudice attends unto them, the Propagation of it throughout the World, in the manner prescribed,

scribed, would be a thing altogether impossible; and therefore absurd to be either commanded or intended. For whosoever should go about to persuade other Men to believe Doctrines, obey Laws, regard Threatnings, or rely upon Promises, without offering them sufficient Reason to convince them of their Truth, Obligation, and Certainty; as in all probability, he would gain but very few Profelytes, so would he most justly deserve with Scorn to be rejected by all Men of Sense and Understanding. It remains therefore that either Religion is not to be propagated in the Way which God has directed, and is the only Method that suits with rational Creatures; or else *the Reasons upon which it is grounded must be such as are fit and proper, in their own Nature, to convince every Man, who duly and impartially weighs and considers them*: Which was my second Proposition.

§. V. I pass on to the Third, which was this; That *every Man*, when he is thereunto duly called and required, *should be ready freely to give the Reason for his being of such a Religion, unto any one that demands it from him*.

It is not indeed every Man's Business to dispute or maintain an Argument for his Religion: Disputation is an *Art*, and requires long Study and much Practice, for a Man to become skilful in it; and he that has even the best Cause to manage, may yet, if he be a Stranger to this Art, be easily baffled by a cunning and sophistical Adversary; and the plainest Truths may be much injured by a weak and unpracticed Defender of them: Nor is every Man, who may be fit to be *received* into the Church of Christ, presently to think himself qualified for *doubtful Disputations*, Rom. xiv. 1. An honest Man, who with a very good Conscience engages in a Law-Suit, altho' he is able to give

to any impartial Man a fair and satisfactory Account of the Justice of his Cause, yet may not be fit to plead it in the Court; and a sincere Christian, who can give very good Reasons for the Religion he professes, may in like manner be of as little Ability to dispute for it.

Nor can it be the Duty even of the most learned Men and able Disputants, for ever to be wrangling with such as are *contentious* and obstinate, and will *not obey the Truth*, Rom. ii. 8. altho' proposed to them with sufficient Evidence for their Conviction: For this would be only to bestow their Time and Labour in vain, which might be employed to better and more useful Purposes. If an *Heretick* will not be reclaimed, even by repeated Instructions and *Admonitions*, he is to be *rejected*, Tit. iii. 10. At least until such time as there may appear to be some better hopes of him; and it was our blessed Saviour's own Direction to his Apostles, that *wheresoever Men would not receive them, nor hear their Words, they should depart out of that House or City, and shake off the Dust of their Feet for a Testimony against them*, Mat. x. 14. Luke ix. 5. which was accordingly put in Practice by St. Paul and Barnabas, Acts xiii. 45, 51. whose Example, being grounded on the express Instruction of Christ himself, may certainly be followed by every Teacher or Preacher of the Gospel.

But as every Man, however unable to dispute much for his Religion, yet ought to have some good Reason for it, as I have already shewn; so ought he to be ready to offer this Reason to any one who demands it of him. And this he is obliged to do, as well for the Credit and Reputation of his Religion, as out of Love and Charity to the Soul of his Neighbour.

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As to the former of these; every Man in his several Stations, and according to his Capacity, ought certainly to endeavour to bring true Religion as much into Repute as he can; and to *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*, Tit. ii. 10. This being the only way we have to advance the Honour of our Creator; for whose Glory we ought above all things to be concerned. But what greater Discredit can there be brought upon Religion, than that they who profess it should be either unable or unwilling to give any just Reason for their so doing? It makes it look as if it were only a Device and Contrivance to impose upon the World, and had nothing of *Truth* and Reality in it; when they dare not fairly bring it to the *Light*, that it may be *manifest* that it comes from *God*, John iii. 21. But, on the other side, when they who own and profess the true Religion are ready, upon all Occasions, to give such Reasons for it, as do not only clearly and thoroughly satisfy themselves, but are also proper and fit to convince all other Men, that impartially give ear unto them: This most evidently demonstrates both their own Sincerity and also the Truth of that Religion which they profess; and consequently frees it from all Suspicion of Imposture, and advances its Reputation with all sober and considering Men.

Then, as to the other thing mentioned, namely, Love and Charity; we are partly taught by the Law of Nature, and more fully and distinctly by that of Christianity, that we ought to have an universal Love for all Men; and consequently that we are obliged to do them all the Good which at any time reasonably may lie within our Power: Now the greatest Good which one Man can do another, and that without any In-

convenience to himself, is to assist and promote him in the Attainment of eternal Happiness; which is not any other way to be done, but by forwarding him in the Profession and Practice of true Religion; to a due Sense of which, it is not possible to bring a Man any other way, than by laying the Grounds and Reasons of it fairly before him: And however any one may be conscious to himself of the Weakness of his own Understanding, or his Inability to argue or dispute much, even for the Truth of itself; yet if with Honesty and Sincerity he has first sought for Satisfaction in Religion, and then upon any fair occasion proposes to another what he himself is so satisfied with, and this without betraying or injuring his Cause, by pretending to say more for it, than what he is qualified for; he knows not how great a Blessing, and what good Success God may be pleased to give to his pious and charitable Endeavours: Especially if his Words are accompanied with that *Meekness* and Gentleness, which is one of the peculiar Marks of true Christianity.

§. VI. And this brings me to my fourth and last Proposition, namely, That *this Reason* (whatever it be which is offered for Religion) *ought always to be given in so mild and meek a manner, as may not tend to exasperate or give any just Ground of Offence unto any one that asks it.*

It is a Fault, and I think a very great one, which too many of all Parties and Perswasions are guilty of, that when once they differ in Opinion about Religion, they often are not content to debate the Matter with Sobriety and Calmness; but they frequently give reproachful Language, and run out into personal Reflections, with bitter and satirical Invectives, or at least oblique and
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harsh Insinuations, each against the other; of which I with the Writings of some learned Men, of all Sides, were not too notorious an Instance: Who, while they appear zealous, each of them, for what they think to be the *Truth*, are often very forgetful of the plain Obligations of *Charity*; which surely is nevertheless due to a Man for being of a different Opinion from us. But methinks that even Reason itself, as well as my Text, should teach us to proceed after another manner; that is to say, always to propose whatever we have to offer in behalf of Religion, after so meek and gentle a way, as at least not justly to provoke our Adversaries to Passion, however obstinate they may be against Conviction.

Whosoever writes or speaks in Defence of Religion, his Design I suppose is, or at least ought always to be, first to convince the Judgment, by enlightening the Understanding of those to whom he applies himself; and having gained over the Judgment to the Acknowledgment of the Truth, then to influence the Will and Affections towards the Practice of it: Now, as there is a decent Warmth, tempered with Gravity, that is very proper to rouse and awaken such as seem to be asleep in Sin and Error, (of which we have more than once an Example in our Blessed Saviour himself, in his dealing with the Scribes and Pharisees) so if a Man goes beyond this, and either sharpens, or rather fours his Discourse with Satyr and Mockery, or embitters it with Railing and Scurrility; the natural Consequence hereof will be, immediately to raise the Passion of those who find themselves thus uncharitably treated, and thereby to darken their Understanding, and render them so much the less capable of any sober or rational Conviction; which is directly contrary to the

very End and Design that in all Disputes (about Religion especially) every good Man ought to propose to himself. Whereas, on the other hand, if Men on these occasions would always take care to deliver themselves with as much Calmness and Moderation as the Case will bear, and never say any thing merely and on purpose only to provoke and vex their Adversaries; such soft *Answers* as these (especially if mutually given) would not fail to turn away at least some part of that *Wrath*, (Prov. xv. 1.) which now so strangely prevails between those of different Opinions in Religion; and consequently dispose them, much more than at present they seem to be, first for the discovering, and then for the embracing, of whatever shall appear to be a solid and real Truth: To which End and Purpose, the Admonition of St. Paul ought never to be forgotten by us, 2. Tim. ii. 24. *The Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men; apt to teach; patient; in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth.*

And thus have I done with the four Propositions, which from my Text I laid down to be handled. Let us see now what proper and useful Inferences may be drawn from them.

§. VII. *First* then, from what has been said it will follow, *That Reason is always to be made use of in Matters of Religion.*

True indeed it is, that our Reason alone, without the Assistance of Revelation, could never have dived into the mysterious Recesses of Christianity; nor must we pretend, by the utmost Improvement of it, to be able fully to comprehend even those things which God has been pleased to reveal to us; for as yet we know but in part, and see but as
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through a Glass darkly, as St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. But notwithstanding this, as our Reason is a necessary means to bring us to Religion, by enabling us to receive all such Proof as can be made of it; so is it no less needful for the right understanding both of its Doctrines and Precepts, and the drawing of useful Consequences from them. how does St. Paul reason with the *Athenians* concerning the Nature of God, and the Worship that is due to him? and when *Felix* sent for him, and heard him concerning the Faith in Christ, he reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come: Acts xvii. 22. &c. How does our blessed Saviour prove against the Sadducees, the Certainty of a future State, and the Resurrection from the Dead by a rational Deduction of Consequences from the Words of God unto *Moses*; for if *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob* were utterly dissolved, and in a State of Insensibility, from whence they were never to return, (as the Sadducees supposed) how could God at that very time, with the least Congruity of Speech, be said to be their God? and (to omit numberless Instances of most accurate reasoning that occur throughout the Holy Scriptures) how is it possible for a Man to have such Reason for his Religion, as may not only satisfy himself, but also be sufficient to convince others of the Truth of it, (as I have shewn from my Text that every Christian is obliged to have;) if in the whole Procedure, and every part of it he be not allowed to make a sober Use of his rational Faculties? For when a Man shall ask us a Reason why we believe and rely upon such and such Principles of our Religion, in order to our Salvation; if the Answer we return be not agreeable to the plain and allowed Rules of Reason, it must needs be impertinent and wide from the Purpose.

In a word, I would desire all those who seem to discountenance the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion, only to consider that Reason is nothing else but rightly to apprehend what is proposed to our Understanding, as far as it is so proposed, truly to judge of what we so apprehend; and regularly to draw Consequences from such Principles as have rightly possessed themselves of our Judgment; and as far as any Man does these three Things, so far beyond dispute he makes use of his Reason: And will any Man say that he does not constantly do all these in Matters of Religion? For if he does not, then either he apprehends not at all, or else misapprehends what God has proposed to him; he judges not at all, or else frames a wrong Judgment concerning such things; and draws no Consequences at all, or else such as are false and absurd from them. The monstrous Absurdity of which three Things is so great, that no Man in his Wits sure will either defend or countenance them.

§. VIII. Secondly, From hence it appears, how great an Absurdity they are guilty of, who ground their Religion upon no better Foundation than only that it was the Profession of their Parents or Ancestors, that they have been educated in it, or that it is the Religion of their Kindred or Country.

Ask many of the Roman Catholicks of this Kingdom of Ireland, why they adhere to a Religion that has so many Errors and even gross Absurdities in it; and that with so much Obstinacy, that they will not so much as listen, or give attention to better Information? And this is the Answer which commonly they will give you, that all their Forefathers, for many Generations, have been of this Perswasion; and this is the Religion of their best Friends and Relations,

tions, and generally of all their Countrymen, and therefore why should not they be of it? And tho' Protestants, who have sufficient Opportunities of more and better Knowledge, ought therefore to be furnished with a more satisfactory *Reason of the Hope that is in them*; yet I fear there are too many even of this Profession, that can give little other Account why they are so, but only that their Parents or Friends have brought them up in it: But he, who has no better Ground than this for his Religion, most certainly places it upon a very false and deceitful Foundation. For whatever Opinion he himself may have of the Judgment and Integrity of those Persons, upon whose Credit alone he so much relies; yet I have shewn that the Reason which every Man should have for his Religion, not only ought to be such as may fully *satisfy himself*; but *must be fit and proper to convince others also*; whereas such Pretences as these may as strongly be pleaded for any *false Religion* as for the true one; for a *Heathen in China*, or a *Mahometan in Turkey*, altogether as plausibly as for any sort of *Christian* in any part of *Europe*; and therefore can by no means be proper or effectual, to persuade any sober Man of the Truth of any Religion whatsoever.

§. IX. *Thirdly*, It also follows, that *they who are called Quakers are in a very great Error; who ground their Religion upon a pretended immediate Revelation, made (as they alledge) unto themselves in particular, by the Spirit of God.*

They affirm, *That the Testimony of the Spirit is that alone by which the true Knowledge of God can be only revealed. These divine inward Revelations, they make absolutely necessary for the building up of true Faith*; nor are they (say they) to be
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subjected to the Examination either of the outward Testimony of the Scriptures, or the natural Reason of Man, as to a more noble or certain Rule or Touch-stone: For this Divine Revelation and inward Illumination is that which is evident and clear of itself, forcing, by its own Evidence and Clearness, the well-disposed Understanding to assent, irresistably moving the same thereunto: As their ablest Writer Robert Barclay tells us *.

It is no part of my present Design. to dispute with these Men, what other Criterion, besides Reason and Scripture, they can have to satisfy themselves, that what they call a Divine immediate Revelation is really such; and not a strong Impulse only of their own warm Imagination, or sometimes even of Satan himself, who (as St. Paul assures us, 2 Cor. xi. 14.) is transformed into an Angel of Light. But taking it as for granted that they have all imaginable Assurance of this within themselves, yet still I demand how, and upon what good Ground, can they convince another of the Truth and Reality of what they thus pretended to?

That Reason is a Light to every Man; that by a sober use of it, we are enabled to receive the solid Proofs that are brought for Revealed Religion, and (as far as is necessary) to understand the Doctrine and Precepts of it; that God, by the Grace and Assistance of his Holy Spirit, is pleased farther to open the Hearts and Understanding of Men (Acts xvi. 14. Luke xxiv. 45.) that they attend unto the things of Religion, and understand the Scriptures wherein they are contained: And, lastly, that it is in his Power, by immediate Revelation, at any time, to communicate any Truth to whom-

* Barclay's Apol. Prop. 2.

Sect. XI. *by the Test of* REASON. 35

whomsoever he thinks fit : All this, I say, is freely granted. But if any Man shall go beyond all this, and set up such a *Revelation*, immediately made to himself, as the *Ground and Foundation of his Religion* ; he ought to be able (as I have already shewn) to give such sufficient and satisfactory Proof thereof, as may convince others of its Truth and Reality : For if such Revelation is once to be allowed, without any other Proof than the Assertion of those who pretend to it, they may run into all the whimsical Extravagancies, and advance the most horrid Blasphemies imaginable ; and who shall dare controul or contradict them in what they do by *Divine Revelation* ? Or if such a Revelation pretended to by one Man, shall be opposed by the like Revelation, with as much Confidence pretended to by another ; how shall we know who is in the right, and who in the wrong, except some outward Proof be given whereby other Men, as well as themselves, may be enabled to distinguish between a Revelation and a Delusion ?

All the Revelations of Religion, that God has hitherto been pleased to make to Mankind, have (partly by Miracles, and partly by other Acts of his Providence) been sufficiently attested ; not only *inwardly* to those who immediately received them, but also *outwardly* to every one who would make an impartial Enquiry into the Truth of them : Nor did our Saviour himself * expect that Credit should be given even to his own Divine Mission and Revelation, upon any other Terms. Some sufficient outward Proof then we require of those inward Revelations which these Men pretend to ; which until they shall give, and that in

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* Luke vii. 22. Mark xvi. 17.

a very satisfactory manner, we cannot but conclude that the very Foundation, upon which they build their whole Religion, is altogether deceitful and delusive, however speciously they have contrived the Superstructure, to make it look fair and plausible to the World.

§. X. *Fourthly*, Another Consequence, no less fairly deducible from the Premises, I take to be, that *they are altogether* in an Error who build their Faith entirely *upon the Credit and Authority of the Church of Rome.*

To set this Matter in a true and clear Light, let us suppose the Question to be put to a sober Papist, Why he believes that System of Doctrines which make up the Religion of that Church, and consequently why he hopes to be saved in that Belief? and the Answer he will give you is this, That the immediate Reason of his Belief, is the Authority of God, who has made these Doctrines known to Mankind. If you demand what Assurance he has that God has made these Doctrines known? he will tell you he is sure of it, because he finds them taught as Divine Truths, and proposed as Objects of Faith by the *Church*. And if you farther ask, How he knows that that Society of Men, who live in Communion with the Pope or Bishop of *Rome*, constitutes and makes up the Church? all the Answer he can possibly give you to this Question, must of necessity be resolved into this, That he is certain it is the true Church because it makes Profession of the true Faith †. For whatever Notes or Marks of the Church they pretend to reckon up, there are but three Things that go to make up the formal Essence,

† Bellarm. de Eccles. Milit. L. 3. C. 2. 5. *Nostra autem.*

sence, and complete the Definition of it; namely, First, *The Profession of the true Faith*. Secondly, *The Participation of the Sacraments*. And, Thirdly, *A due Subjection to lawful Pastors*. The two last of which (according to themselves) are either Parts, or at least inseparable Consequences of the first; it being always reckoned amongst them as a matter of Faith, to believe the Number, Nature and Necessity of their Sacraments; and to own the Power and Authority of the Pope, and other Pastors, that, according to the Laws of their Church, are in Subordination to him.

Thus then the Matter stands: A Papist believes his Faith and Religion to be true, because it is revealed by God: That it is revealed by God, he believes because he finds it professed and taught by the true Church: And that this same Society of Men which he means doth make up and constitute the true Church, he also believes for this Reason, because they profess and maintain the true Faith and Religion; and so proves the first thing by the second; the second by the third, and the third by the first again: Which is a way of arguing that the Logicians call a *Circle*, and is justly exploded by all Men of the least Sense and Understanding.

Since then (as I have shewn) every Man ought to have some good Reason for his Religion, which may be fit and proper not only to satisfy himself, but also to convince others; and since this way of reasoning in a Circle cannot possibly afford any true Conviction or Satisfaction to any Man; it follows that they who have no better Support than this for their Religion, do certainly build it upon a false Foundation.

§. XI. *Fifthly*, From what has been said, it may be farther inferred against the Church of *Rome*;

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that, however necessary it may be frequently to admonish all Sorts of Men, that they be very cautious and sober in all the Interpretations which at any time they put upon the Word of God, or any Part or Passage of it; *yet it is not lawful to hinder any Man, whether learned or unlearned, from reading, or hearing the Holy Scriptures read, in such a Language as he understands.* For since every Man ought to have some good Reason that he may satisfy his Conscience of the Truth of that Profession, in and by which he hopes to be saved, and therefore must not take his Religion upon Trust, on the Credit of any Man or Church whatsoever; but is bound to make the best use he can of that Understanding that God has given him in the search of it, (as I think has already been sufficiently proved;) it will follow that no Man ought to be debarred from the use of any Means that he shall think necessary or proper to make use of in an Enquiry of such vast Importance to him; every Man indeed is bound in Charity (as he has Ability and Opportunity for it) to advise and admonish his Neighbour the best he can, for his Soul's good: Nor do I doubt but that, in some Cases, human Laws may justly be enacted by proper Penalties, to restrain Men from *teaching, or propagating* some sort of Opinions or Doctrines: But if a Man gives sufficient Security that he will not disturb or corrupt the Public with his private Thoughts or Errors, and desires no more but that he may not be hinder'd from finding out the surest way he can for *himself* to go to Heaven; who has any Warrant or Authority from God by *force* to restrain or thwart him in such a Resolution?

Let us then suppose the very worst; which is, that ignorant Men will not oftentimes be content to dwell upon those Passages of Holy Scriptures, that

that are most plain as well as instructive ; but are curious, and prying into the most obscure Parts of it : Which (notwithstanding all the Caution and Advice that is given them by their Teachers) many of them will misinterpret ; and *wrest* not only them, but *the other Scriptures also to their own Destruction*, 2 Pet. iii. 16. Let us suppose all this, I say, and then consider what will follow.

Because many ignorant Men will probably make an ill Use of the very Means of Instruction that God in his Providence has provided for all Mankind, and exposed indifferently to the View and Use of all that will have recourse thereto ; does this give sufficient Authority to the Governours of any Church, under severe Penalties, to withhold these Means from *all* that are of that sort ; and thereby to keep them, most certainly, in greater Ignorance than otherwise they would be ?

I (for Example) am a Man of little Knowledge, and a slender Capacity ; yet sensible of the Obligation that lies upon me to seek for what Instruction I can in Religion, in order to my eternal Salvation. I am (suppose) in a good measure convinced that that Religion which was taught by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, is the true Religion ; but (amongst the many Disputes that are in the World) am at a loss to know what are the genuine Doctrines of Faith, and Rules of Life that go to make up the whole System of it ; now all who call themselves Christians being agreed in this, that the Holy Scriptures, if rightly understood, would give me great (and, as some hold, full and sufficient) Information in what I desire to learn ; I would willingly set myself to read, and study them the best I can, in my own Mother Tongue, into which I understand they have been several times translated. No, say the Divines of the Church

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of *Rome*, you are an *unlearned Man*; and therefore in all probability will very much misinterpret the Holy Scriptures. But have not very many *learned Men* also most grossly misinterpreted these sacred Writings? And why then should such as they be permitted to read them? But what other and better way must I take, to be well convinced and satisfied touching the genuine Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity? Why, say they, rely upon the Authority of the Church. But I have just now shewn that they are altogether in an Error, who build their Faith upon the Credit and Authority of the Church of *Rome*; and the same Reason would hold as well against any other Church, that in this manner should attempt to impose a Religion upon me: Neither am I in this Matter to depend upon the Credit of my Parents, Kinsfolks, or Country; but must have some better Ground of satisfying my Conscience, as I have already proved: And what better Ground of Satisfaction in this Case I can have, than to search and enquire the best I can into the true Meaning of so much of the Holy Scriptures, as I am able, with what Helps are in my Power, to attain unto, I confess is beyond my Conception or Imagination.

I therefore conclude, that no Man ought to be debarred from reading or studying the best he can, the Holy Scriptures in any Language that he understands. I grant that he may err in the Interpretation of them; and if his Error be occasioned by any Fault of his own, it is only at his own peril; if not, I cannot but think that God, who is gracious, will be merciful to him on that account: But if, not content to enjoy the Freedom of his own Conscience, he endeavours to propagate his false Opinions, and thereby is the Cause

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Cause of Disturbance in the World ; there may be proper and legal ways of restraining and punishing of him, according to the Nature and Demerit of his Crime.

St. *Peter*, we find, was very well aware that they who were not only *unlearned*, but also *unstable*, were very apt to wrest not only the difficult Passages in St. *Paul's* Epistles, but also *the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction*, 2 Pet. iii. 16. Now if the Consequence from hence were, that therefore such Persons should not read the Scriptures at all, I cannot but think that he would have given some Intimation of a matter of so great Importance : Whereas the only Inference which he draws in the following Words, is, that Men should be cautious, (and that at their own peril) what Doctrines or Sentiments they entertain : *Yetherefore, beloved, (says he) seeing you know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own Stedfastness*, ch. xvii.

And if it be a good Argument that *unlearned* Men ought not to study the Scriptures, because we find that they often misunderstand them ; whereby they can do little Hurt, but only to themselves alone, it will hold much better against those that are *learned* : Experience having abundantly assured us, that many of them have not only misinterpreted the Text, but also by their Art and Eloquence, often drawn away multitudes of People to embrace their Errors.

§. XII. *Sixthly*, (and that I may now at last come Home to ourselves) from what has been said it will appear, how happy we of the Established Church are (or may be, if the Fault be not our own) not only in that every one amongst us has full and free Liberty to make all the Enquiry

quity he can into the Grounds and Reasons of his Religion; but also, and chiefly, that there is no part of our Religion, nor any thing by our Church required from any Member of it, but will fairly and fully bear the Test of the most rational Disquisition; so that every Man of us, that will but be at a little pains to make the Enquiry, may very soon not only satisfy his own Conscience why he is and ought to be of our Communion, but also be able (as my Text requires) to give a sufficient *Answer to every other Man, that asketh him a Reason of the Hope that is in him.*

And because this is a matter of very great Importance to us all, I shall spend the remaining part of this Discourse in shewing upon what solid and satisfactory Grounds it is, that we expect eternal Salvation, in the Profession and Practice of that Religion which by Law is Established amongst us; and that in such a manner, as I think may abundantly convince every Man that is sober and impartial in this Enquiry: In order whereunto it is most proper to observe, that if any Man ask *why we hope to be saved in our Church and Religion*; his Demand will in effect include these four Questions.

First, Why we are of any Religion at all, and not either downright *Atheists*, who deny the very Being of God; or *Epicureans*, whose Principles lay no Foundation for any Worship to be paid to him?

Secondly, Why we embrace the *Christian Religion*, and are neither *Jews*, *Mahometans*, nor *Heathens*?

Thirdly, Whereas the grand Division of Christians, in these Parts of the World, is into those of the *Church of Rome*, and those of the Reformed

or *Protestant Church*; Why we are *Protestants* and not *Papists*; of the *Reformed* rather than the *Roman Religion*?

Fourthly and lastly, since there are some Divisions even amongst *Protestants* themselves, it may reasonably be required that we should shew, why we are *Protestants* of our *Established Church*, and not of any Party that dissents or divides from her?

To which four Questions if we return such plain and solid Answers, as may easily be understood, and are sufficient to give full Satisfaction to every Man of common Sense and Understanding; nothing I think will be wanting for the full Performance of what I have shewn my Text requires from every Christian: And altho' to do any tolerable Justice to each of these Points, would require rather a Volume than only a part of a short Discourse, yet, such is the native Light of Truth, that I doubt not, with God's Blessing, but by briefly proposing some of the chief Heads or Topicks of what has often been, and may much more largely be said upon them, I shall either give good Satisfaction to every reasonable Man, or at least put him in the way of farther satisfying himself, if he will but be at the Pains of a sober and diligent Enquiry into the matter.

§. XIII. First then we are to consider why we are of any Religion at all, and not *Atheists* or *Epicureans*.

However difficult the very Notion of *Eternity* may appear to our finite and narrow Understanding, yet it is plain, even to Demonstration, that of necessity there must be an eternal Being, which never had a beginning. For if we could suppose but one single Instant in which nothing

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at all did exist; since from no Cause no Effect can follow, the Consequence unavoidably must be, that nothing could ever be produced into Existence. It follows then, that either the World itself must be eternal, or else, that there is some eternal, original Cause of it.

I grant indeed that whichever of these Opinions we hold, we are equally attended with this Difficulty, That *the Understanding of Man being finite and limited, cannot frame a clear and comprehensive Notion of [Eternity, which is] a Thing unlimited and infinite*: And yet notwithstanding this, That either the World is eternal, or that there is some eternal Cause of it, is, as I have shewn, no less than demonstrable: One side or other of the Disjunction must of necessity be taken; and a Difficulty that equally presses upon both Parts, cannot justly be made an Argument against either. A prudent Man therefore ought to look farther, and thoroughly consider what Difficulties more there may be, which arise upon one side of the Question, but are fairly avoided on the other; and where he finds the least and the fewest, there he will fix and determine his Judgment.

As to the Eternity of the World, take it which way you will, it involves such Difficulties or rather Absurdities, as are neither to be avoided nor digested.

If you say that the *Matter* of the World, having for numberless Ages lain quiet and altogether without Motion, at last began to move; it is absurd to imagine that *Matter* (which of itself is supposed to be an inert and unactive Being) after having lain from all Eternity in an universal State of Quiet and Non-motion, should at last, without any other efficient Cause *but itself*, pass into a State of Motion and Activity.

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If you say that the Motion of Matter was eternal, and that by continual Motion it at last, without any Contriver but meer Chance, fell of itself into that regular Order, which for so many Years it has been found exactly and uniformly to have kept, (to say nothing of the great Absurdity of ascribing an *eternal* Property to Matter, [*viz.* Motion] which by all is allowed not to be *natural* or *essential* to it) this is altogether as foolish as to imagine, that a great quantity of Brass and Iron being melted together in a Chaldron, and violently stirred about, should, in process of time, frame itself into Springs, Wheels, &c. and put itself together into a most curious Clock, with all imaginable Variety as well as Regularity of Motions, and of itself should go for above five thousand Years, without ever erring so much as one single Minute, or any the least Appearance that ever it is like to be out of Order. Or, that a blind Man, who knew nothing of Letters, nor understood a Word of Greek, might yet, by often moving a Pen at random upon Paper, at last write such a Poem as *Homer's Iliads*, without making a false Quantity or misplacing so much as an Accent.

Or, lastly, If you shall say that the World, in the same Manner and Posture that now it exists, has always and forever been: Since *unthinking Necessity* is altogether as blind as *Chance* itself; the same Absurdity that I have last represented to overthrow the Opinion of the World's being made by *Chance*, will here again take place; and may as effectually be urged, as it was in the other Case. And besides this, the Eternity of the World this way stated, necessarily implies an *eternal Succession* of each particular kind of Animals and Vegetables, as well as of Days and Years;

If

Years; and such an eternal Succession, as necessarily implies a *Number actually infinite*: For if (for Example) there has been an eternal Succession of *Men* in the World; the *Number* of all those who have been alive and are now dead, taken together, must be *actually infinite*. And yet an *eternal Succession* of Things without any beginning, or a *Number actually infinite*, is to me as plain and palpable a Contradiction, as any that can be imagined: There being no Number whatever, but what by the Accession of more Particulars, may become bigger; and more Days and Nights having passed; and more Men been born into and dyed out of the World by this time, than what had been a Year or two ago: Nor can we imagine, but whatsoever has had an *end*, (as all the past Generations of Men have had, and this must soon have) must of necessity also have had a *beginning*.

“ Add to this, that where there is a *Succession*
 “ of Things, each and every of which Things
 “ has had a beginning, there the whole *Succession*
 “ must have had a beginning also. Since then
 “ each and every Animal, Vegetable, Day, and
 “ Year of this World, has had a beginning; it
 “ follows, I think to a Demonstration, that the
 “ whole *Succession* of them must necessarily have
 “ had a beginning; and consequently that this
 “ World, in the State and Condition wherein we
 “ find it, cannot possibly have been eternal, or
 “ without any beginning at all.

These Things being duly considered, I cannot imagine how the Eternity of the World can in any Sense be allowed of or admitted. Let us pass then to the other part of the Disjunction, and see whether the same Difficulties, or any that are equal to them, do arise upon this also.

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Sect. XIII. by the Test of R E A S O N. 47

They who assert, That, this World had a *beginning*, but that there is an *eternal* original Cause of it; do maintain, That as this Cause is an intelligent Being, so is it altogether unchangeable, and in its very nature incapable of any Alteration or Succession. Whatsoever therefore it willed or decreed, it did it from all Eternity, altho' the outward visible *Effect* of such Will or Decree might be of such a nature, as to be incapable of being eternal, and consequently must have a *beginning* of its actual Existence. Now here again we meet that common Difficulty which I first mentioned; viz. That *the Understanding of Man being infinite and limited, cannot frame a clear and comprehensive Notion of [Eternity, which is] a Thing unlimited and infinite.* But this Difficulty being (as I have already said) to be wholly laid aside, because it equally presses upon both Parts of the Disjunction, there is none other that arises or occurs, to be made an Objection against the Doctrine.

A spontaneous beginning of Motion, in an *eternal unactive* Being; *eternal* Motion, and yet not *natural* or *essential* to the thing moved; the most *curious and regular Contrivance*, and yet to be the Effect of blind Chance or *fatal Necessity*, which is equally *blind*; *eternal Succession* without a *beginning*; a *Number actually infinite*: All these, I say, which affect one side of the Question only, are most gross and manifest Absurdities. But the *eternal Existence of an immutable Being, without any manner of Change or Succession*, which is the only Objection against the other side, has no other Difficulty in it, but what equally presses upon both Parts; viz. That *the very Notion of Eternity is too big for the human Understanding.*

Add to all this, that not only the History written by *Moses*, but all others that trace Things backward

backward to the most remote Antiquity, do unanimously concur in such an Account of the Original of Nations, and the gradual Plantation of the several Parts of the Earth, (some of which, tho' commodiously capable of Inhabitants, are yet to this Day uninhabited) as plainly shews, that the Tradition universally received among Mankind was always this, That the World was not *eternal*, but had a *beginning*.

But because some Men are obstinate, in adhering to an Opinion which they have once entertained, whatever Arguments are, or may be brought against it; let us suppose (notwithstanding all that has been said) that the World might possibly have been from all Eternity: Yet still, if both in the whole, and every particular part of it, there appears to be all the *Design* and *Contrivance* that can well be imagined, it must of necessity follow that there is some eternal *Contriver*, which in *Nature*, if not in *Order of Time*, is the original and first Cause of it: It being (as I have already said) equally absurd to imagine, that the most exact and regular *Design* and *Contrivance* should be the Effect either of blind *Chance*, or *unthinking fatal Necessity*.

And if this same *first and original Cause* can, beyond all Exception, be proved to be most powerful, wise and good; then the being of a God is clearly and fully demonstrated.

Let us then but take a View of the Structure of the Universe, as far as it is or may be the Object of our Sense, or Knowledge; let us consider all the several Parts, that go to make up the whole Composition; together with their various Operations, Motions, and mutual Relations one to another; the Sun, the Moon, the Stars and Planets, which in a due Measure shed their comfortable

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able Light, Heat and Influence, upon us and our Habitation here below ; and by the constant Regularity of their Motions, distinguish and mark out unto us the Day for Labour, the Night for Rest, and the several Seasons of the Year for the Production, ripening and gathering in the Fruits of the Earth ; without which it were impossible, by the Course of Nature, that living Creatures should subsist ; the Fire, the Air, the Earth, the Water ; the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea ; the Dew, the Rain, the Fountains and Rivers ; the great Variety of Trees, Herbs, and all sorts of Fruits and Vegetables, which the Earth produces and propagates ; some for Food, some for Medicine, and some for Delight : All the several sorts of Animals in the Earth, and the Water ; with the admirable Structure of their several Bodies, according to the Place or Element wherein they have their different Abode or Habitation ; and the several Senses and various Instincts implanted in them, whereby they are enabled to preserve themselves, and also continue their proper and respective Kinds or Species : And lastly *Man*, the Lord of this inferior World ; his Body framed in a wonderful manner, and his Mind endowed with the noble Powers and Faculties of Understanding, Will, and Memory, far beyond any other earthly Creature whatsoever : Whereby he is enabled to distinguish between not only sensible, but also rational Good and Evil, to pursue the one and avoid the other ; and not only each Man to preserve and provide for himself, but also in some measure to promote the general Comfort and Happiness of all Mankind. Let us, I say, thoroughly consider all these Things, and farther subdivide them into as many Particulars, as our own Thoughts and Observation will easily suggest unto us ; and then demand, Can any thing

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be a greater Argument of *Power*, than this vast and stupendous Fabrick (the Extent of which is unknown to us) is of his, that first made and still supports it? Can any thing be a greater Demonstration of *Wisdom*, than its Beauty, Order, and the mutual Correspondence of its several Parts, are of his, who thus has contrived it? And, lastly, is not the great Usefulness of all its Parts, (which more and more we every Day discover) in order to the several Ends for which they are evidently framed, an abundant Argument that the Author and Maker of it is a Being of the greatest *Goodness* and *Beneficence*, in that he has thus provided not only for the Being, but also for the Well-being of all his Creatures, according to their several Capacities? He that can deny, or but entertain a Doubt of any of these Things, must certainly be void of all serious Thought and Consideration; and consequently we may, with holy *David*, most certainly pronounce him to be a *Fool*, who dares, but even in his Heart, to say that there is no God, Ps. xiv. 1. And since the whole Course of the Universe, and all that appears, or can be so much as imagined in it, may altogether as well be accounted for upon the Supposition of one only God, as of many; and Beings are not in our own Fancy to be multiplied without any manner of Cause or Reason for it; it will follow, that sober Reason would of itself conclude for the *Unity* of the Divine Nature, altho' Revelation (the Certainty of which I shall presently prove) had not given us such farther Assurance, as it has, that there is but *one God*.

And if once the Being of God, as the Author and Contriver of this whole World and every thing in it, be thus beyond all Contradiction established; the Relation which we, as his Creatures, bear unto him, and the constant Dependence

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dance which of Necessity we always must have upon him, do so plainly infer an Obligation upon us (as we are rational, and also endowed with Freedom of Will and a Power of Election) always to honour, worship and obey him, as far as we can any way come to the Knowledge of his Will and Pleasure, that I need not offer any thing farther for the Proof of it: And this I take to be a sufficient Answer to the first Question; namely, *Why we are of any Religion at all, and not downright Atheists or Epicureans?*

§. XIV. But this Answer will receive a new and farther Confirmation, from that which we have to make to the second Question that comes next to be considered; namely, *Why we do embrace the Christian Religion, and are neither Jews, Mahometans, nor Heathens?*

To this our Answer is, That we are Christians, (and of no other Religion) because *Christianity is from God*; and if we can make this Assertion good, it not only shews the Obligation that lies upon us to be of this Religion rather than of any other, but also is a farther Proof of the Being of God, and consequently of the Necessity of Religion in general.

Now, to prove Christianity to be from God, or in other Terms, that God is the Author of it, we principally insist upon four Arguments; the first drawn from its own intrinsic Wisdom and Goodness; the second from Prophecies; the third from Miracles, and the fourth from the great Success which this Religion met with at its first Appearance in the World. Which four Things, taken all together, we judge abundantly sufficient to establish the main Conclusion.

§. XV. As to the first of these; if we allow God to be the first and original Cause of all

Things, and at the same time to be most wise and good, as from his Works has been already shewn; the Consequence must be, that whatever Doctrine Discipline, or Institution, contains or carries in itself the most consummate Goodness and Wisdom, that such a Thing is capable of; and has nothing in its Contrivance but what is both wise and good; may well be ascribed to God (who is the Fountain of all Wisdom and Goodness) as its mediate or immediate Author: And as whatever tends to the advancing and promoting both the Honour and Glory of the Creator, and the common Welfare and Happiness of the Creature, is by all Men allowed to be *good*; so if it be as well fitted and contrived as may be, in order to the compassing of so noble an End; it must be looked upon as having all the Marks and Tokens of *Wisdom*, as well as *Goodness*, of which it is or can be capable.

Let us then take but a transient View of Christianity, and we shall immediately find that it gives us the highest and most exalted Notions of God that we are capable of receiving; it teaches us to look upon him as a Being most absolutely perfect in all respects; a Spirit infinitely wise, powerful, just and merciful; *the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the blessed and only Potentate, King of Kings; and Lord of Lords; who only hath Immortality, dwelling in the Light which no Man can approach unto, whom no Man hath seen, nor can see,* 1 Tim. i. 17. and vi. 15, 16. In a word, whatever is great, good or glorious, far beyond the Comprehension or shallow Imagination of Man, is all in the highest Degree taught and proclaimed, throughout the Holy Scriptures, of God the Creator of Heaven and Earth; and all Christians are thereby taught and commanded to give Honour,
Glory,

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Glory, Praise and Adoration, with all their Powers and Faculties, accordingly to him.

Again, if any thing can tend to the general Happiness of Mankind here, and qualify them for that which is future in Heaven hereafter ; it must be universal Piety, Truth, Justice, Charity, Humility, Sobriety, Temperance, and whatever else is necessary to raise their Minds above those little and unworthy Ends which worldly Men propose to themselves, and which are the Cause of so much Contention and Confusion here, and (as all Religions do teach) of intolerable Punishment and Misery hereafter ; and that all these Things, in the very utmost Degree, are taught, expressed, and most strictly required by the Christian Religion, without the least Allowance or Mixture of any thing that is evil or impure ; a very little Acquaintance with the new Testament will soon inform us.

And, *Lastly*, If any thing can, at the same time, secure our everlasting Happiness in Heaven hereafter, and also add something to that of those blessed and immortal Spirits who there already enjoy the beatifick Presence of God ; it must be that we (*Luke xv. 10.*) who are Sinners, and thereby have incurred God's Wrath, are admitted to Repentance, and a Possibility of Pardon and Reconciliation, upon such Terms as are neither inconsistent with any of God's Attributes, on the one hand, nor impossible or impracticable to us, on the other : And how well the Gospel is calculated for this Purpose, when it teaches us that *Christ dyed for our Sins*, *1 Cor. xv. 3.* that *Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in his Name among all Nations*, *Luke xxiv. 47.* and that *God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*, *Luke xi. 13.* with a great deal more of the same

import ; will soon be obvious to every one, who sets himself but a little seriously to consider it.

It would far exceed the designed Proportion of this Part of my Discourse, should I proceed to consider the several and particular Doctrines and Rules of Christianity, and farther to shew the great Wisdom and Goodness of God that appears in all and each of them. But if we can but suppose that any Religion whatever may be worthy of and agreeable to the infinite Perfections of the Divine Majesty, there certainly is nothing wanting in that which was taught by Christ and his Apostles, to raise it completely up to that Character ; and this is the first Argument which we urge to prove that Christianity is from God ; namely, the intrinsic Wisdom and Goodness of the Religion itself. I proceed to the

§. XVI. Second, which is drawn from *Prophecies* ; whereby this Truth is farther confirmed.

That the whole Body of the Jewish Nation have, for above these seventeen hundred Years past, been in constant Expectation of the Appearance of an extraordinary Person, to be sent by God into the World, under the Title of *Christ* or the *Messiah*, is what they themselves own, and no Man does or can deny : And this very Expectation sufficiently shews, that some Predictions or *Prophecies* (whether true or false) there have been, that such a Person was to come ; for if no one had ever pretended to foretel any such Thing, what could possibly raise such an universal Imagination, and that for so many Years, in such a vast Multitude of People ? It is not now my Design to enter into a particular Examination of all these Prophecies : But if all the most eminent and remarkable ones of them, are clearly and conspicuously fulfilled, in the Person of our Blessed

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Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus, and there is not so much as one of all those ancient Predictions, that was ever by the Jews themselves interpreted of the Messiah, but what is fairly fulfilled and accomplished in him; this will at the same time shew, that these were real Prophecies, and not Figments; and that Jesus Christ, whom we own and receive, is really and truly the Person prophesied of: And since it is allowed on all Hands, that none but God can foretel such things as are in themselves contingent, at any considerable distance of Time before they come to pass; the Consequence must be, that Jesus is that Messiah, whom God did long since promise to send into the World; and consequently, that the Doctrine and Religion which he taught, is from God himself.

Now, the most remarkable Prophecies, or some of them at least, of ancient Record in the *Old Testament*, and generally understood to be meant of the Messiah, are these; That he should be the *Seed of the Woman*; That he should bruise the *Serpent's Head*, and have his *Heel bruised* by him, *Gen. iii. 15.* That he should be the *Seed of Abraham*; and that *in him all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, *Gen. xxii. 18.* That the *Scepter should not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until he should come*; and that *unto him should the gathering of the People be*, *Gen. xlix. 10.* That he should be a *Prophet like unto Moses*; *raised up among the People to speak the Words that God should put into his Mouth*; and that *whosoever of the People of Israel should not hearken to his Words, God would require it of them*, *Deut. xviii. 18, 19.* That he should be from the *Root of Jesse*, (who was the Father of King David;) *that he should stand for an Ensign of the People, to which the Gen-*
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tiles should seek, and that his Rest should be glorious, Is. xi. 10. *That the Government should be upon his Shoulders; that his Name should be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace: Of the Increase of whose Government and Peace there should be no end, upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever,* Is. ix. 6, 7. *That he should be conceived and born of a Virgin, and called Immanuel, (which signifies God with us)* Is. vii. 14. *Mat. i. 23. That he should be despised and rejected of Men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief: That he should bear our Grievs and carry our Sorrows, be wounded for our Transgressions; and that with his Stripes we should be healed, the Lord laying on him the Iniquity of us all,* Is. liii. 3, &c. with more to this purpose in the same Chapter. *That he should come within a certain Number of Years foretold by the Prophet Daniel, (Dan. ix. 24, &c.) and be cut off, but not for himself; after which the City and the Sanctuary should be destroyed, and the Sacrifice and Oblation should cease.* These, I say, (with divers others that may be reckoned up) are remarkable Prophecies concerning the Messiah, recorded in the Old Testament many Centuries of Years before our Blessed Saviour's Appearance in this World: To which also may be added a great Number of other Passages, which by the Jews themselves have always been looked upon as pointing, some of them *prophetically*, and others *typically*, to the same Person: Infomuch that, to this very Day, there is no Opinion that more strongly possesses the Minds of all that People than this; That the Messiah, whom God long since promised, and whom they suppose not yet to be come; shall in due Time come and appear in the World.

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Now, whatever Difficulties may seem to arise in the Interpretation of all, or any of these, either typical or prophetical Passages, there is one very fair and reasonable Key to be made use of, which immediately opens and solves them all; which is, That the Kingdom of the Messiah, to which God requires all Mankind to be subject, is not a *temporal* but a *spiritual* Kingdom, *John* xviii. 36. and therefore that all such Passages as relate to him, and are not capable of a literal Interpretation, are to be understood in a spiritual Sense: Let us take, I say, but this one easy and rational Supposition with us, and the whole System of Types and Prophecies that occur in the Old Testament, concerning the Messiah, will easily and fairly be cleared up by it.

Thus, for Example; Altho' in a strict literal Sense it cannot be said, That our Blessed Saviour *sate upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order it*, *Is.* ix. 7. because he was no temporal Prince, as the other in his Time had been; yet is it a sufficient fulfilling of this part of that Prophecy, that he, who in his human Nature was both the legal and natural Son of *David*, was appointed as a spiritual King for ever, to rule over the People of God. Thus also, tho' literally he might be called the *Seed of the Woman*, *Gen.* iii. 15. because he was conceived and born of a pure Virgin; yet his *bruising of the Serpent's Head and the Serpent's bruising his Heel*, is mystically to be understood of his *destroying the Works of the Devil*, *John* iii. 8. and of the Sufferings and Temptations wherewith the Devil assaulted him, and continues to do the like, more or less, to all Christians, who are the Members of his mystical Body *the Church*: And after the same manner all other the like Difficulties, that any where occur in the Prophecies

cies concerning the Messiah, may, I think, most easily and fairly be solved; as will abundantly appear to every one who seriously and impartially compares them all, with the History of our Blessed Saviour's Conception, Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven; together with the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon his Apostles and Disciples, and the consequent Propagation of the Gospel throughout all the known Parts of the World.

I need not therefore so far enlarge this Discourse as to go through the Particulars of these Types and Prophecies, and shew, how that very many of them are *literally*, the rest of them *spiritually*, and all of them *fairly and rationally* accomplished in our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus: But, taking the Sum of the Argument together, I think it must have very great Force upon all unprejudic'd Minds, if we thus put it into form.

A great Number of Types, Prefigurations and Prophecies, in several and distant Ages; some of them very plain, and all of them so pointing one way, as to beget in the whole Nation of the Jews, an Expectation of the coming of a Messiah; and lastly, all of them in due time fairly and coherently fulfilled in one and the same Person; all this, I say, could be the Effect of no other Wisdom or Foresight, but that of God; and consequently the Person in whom all these were fulfilled, ought to be looked upon as that very Messiah, who was promised, and accordingly sent by God into the World.

But all this is come to pass in the Person of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus.

Therefore he is the Messiah or Christ, who was promised, and accordingly sent into the World by God. And if thus much is once granted, the

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Consequence will not be denied, that therefore that Religion, which was taught by himself in Person, and afterwards by those who were commissioned by him, is to be looked upon as coming from God and of Divine Authority; and thus much for the second Argument, whereby we prove the Christian Religion to be from God: I proceed to the

§. XVII. Third, which is drawn from the many *Miracles* that have been wrought for the Confirmation of it.

Whoever acknowledges God to be the first Cause and Creator of all Things, can mean no more by this Word *Nature*, when applied to created Beings, but only those Attributes and Qualifications, together with that Force and Energy, wherewith God has endowed them, and each of them: And thus it is the *Nature* of each thing, to do or to bear, whatever God has fitted and appointed it for.

How far the *Power of Nature* extends; or (in other Terms) what Attributes, Qualifications, Force or Energy, God, who is Almighty, can, if he so pleases, bestow upon any created Being, I take it for granted that no Man knows: But how far the ordinary *Course of Nature* goes; that is to say, what is the State and Condition of Things, as far as they appear to us; what are the common Effects of such and such Causes, and the usual Causes of such and such Effects; we all of us in a very great Measure do know, and every Day learn from our constant Experience and Observation.

If then I should see a Cause, duly applied, and yet not produce its usual Effect, or an Effect produced by a Cause in all appearance unsuitable to it; altho' I should not say this is altogether beyond

yond the *Power of Nature*, (which in one Sense is no other than the *Power of God*, to whom all things, that do not imply a Contradiction, are possible) yet I very well might say, this is beyond that *ordinary Course of Nature*, which by my constant Experience I find that God has established in the World; and such a thing I should call by the Name of a *Wonder*.

Again, If a rational Agent should bring about any Effect, in *outward Appearance* different from the ordinary Course of Nature; but yet (as I should apprehend) did perform this by some secret Method of applying such Causes, as in the common Nature of things were proper, and of Force sufficient for such a Production; this I should call the *Power of Art*.

But if such an Agent should *knowingly* and *designedly* do any thing, in order to produce any remarkable Effect; and accordingly should thereby produce it, without the least ground to suspect or imagine the Intervention of any such sort of *natural Cause*; such a Work as this so performed is what I call by the Name of a *Miracle*.

There may, I grant, be divers Cases, wherein a Man may very much doubt, and perhaps not be well able to determine, whether such or such a Work be a *Miracle*, or whether it be performed by the *Power of Art*: But other Instances again may be supposed, which, if appearing to be true in fact, no Man in his Wits can doubt to be really and truly *Miracles*. For Example; Let us suppose a Number of Men, some blind, others lame, maimed, sick of several sorts of Diseases, or plainly possessed by evil Spirits speaking within them, and violently distorting their Bodies with convulsive Motions; and that all these should be healed and cured of their several Mal-

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Sect. XVII. *by the Test of* REASON. 61

ladies, by a Touch only, or barely by a Word speaking; could any Man be so extravagant as to say, that all this might possibly be performed by some *secret Art*, whereby a Man might be enabled to apply proper *natural Causes*, (in the common acceptation of that Expression) sufficient to the production of these Effects? Suppose five or seven Loaves, of a common bigness, to be broken and distributed among four or five Thousand hungry Men, and to give them all a full Meal; and even the Fragments that remained, to be more in quantity than the Loaves themselves were: Or, lastly, to omit other Instances; Suppose one Man to be dead, and carrying to his Burial; another to have lain four Days in his Grave; and a third to have been crucified, and a Spear thrust into his very Entrails, and then to have lain in the Sepulchre to the third Day; and all of these to have been raised again, and actually restored to Life: If a Man should allow the Facts to be true, and yet deny them to be *miraculous*, in the Sense that I have now explained the Word, the whole World certainly would look upon him to be most unreasonably obstinate.

If *Miracles* were really wrought and urged for the Confirmation of any Doctrine, which my Reason most plainly assured me implied a Contradiction, or were unworthy of God, and not to be reconciled with his known Attributes; such a Doctrine as this I could not believe, or give my Assent to, whatever were done or pretended to be done, for the establishing of it. For to give Assent at the same time to Contradictions, is absolutely impossible; and since our Reason assures us, that GOD, who is Eternal, Immortal, and absolutely Perfect, is therefore altogether Unchangeable; it must follow, that whatever is contrary to any of his

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Attributes, must of necessity imply a Contradiction: And therefore when I had made the utmost Enquiry I could into such Miracles as these, if I were not able to detect them of *Art*, or *Imposture*, I could only look upon them as wrought by some evil Spirit, (*Deut. xiii. 3. Mat. xxiv. 24.*) and *permitted* by God, as a Trial of our Faith and Adherence to him. But if, upon the strictest Examination, the Doctrine, however above the reach of my Understanding to comprehend, should appear to have nothing *contradictory*, either in it or consequent from it, nor to contain or imply any thing, that were contrary to what I believe of God; and the Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of it, were really and truly such, as they were pretended to be; such a Doctrine as this I should look upon, as having all the Evidence of Divine Authority that could be desired: Nor could I apprehend, for what other Reason God, in such a Case as this, should work Miracles or cause them to be wrought, but only in order to beget in Men a firm Belief of such Doctrine. If God by a Voice from Heaven should tell me, that such a Doctrine were true; this would be no more but a *Miracle*; and every other Miracle, in the Case supposed, would appear to me to be as full an Attestation from him, who is the Author and Controller of *Nature*, and without whose Power or particular Permission, the *Course* of it cannot at any time be altered.

Now take the whole System of Christian *Doctrine*, (not as it is altered or corrupted by this or that Sect or Party, but) as it is delivered to us pure and unmixed in the Scriptures; and altho' there may be some things obscure and above the reach of our Understanding; yet is there nothing in it that can be pretended to imply a *Contradiction*; and that

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the whole Frame of it is altogether worthy of God, and agreeable to his Attributes, I have already sufficiently shewn from the intrinſick Wiſdom and Goodneſs that appears to be in it; and therefore ſince ſo many *Miracles* (in the proper Acceptation of that Word) were wrought by our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, his Apoſtles and Diſciples, for the Confirmation of this Doctrin (as muſt be evident to every one who reads the four *Gospels* and the *Acts of the Apoſtles*) it unqueſtionably muſt follow, from what has been ſaid, that the Doctrin itſelf is from God, and that he is the Author and Approver of it.

And if any one ſhall queſtion the Truth of theſe Matters of Fact, or doubt whether they were performed according as they are recorded in the Hiſtory of the *New Teſtament*; for his Conviction I need only appeal to the many and great Sufferings of the Apoſtles and Diſciples of Chriſt, (many of whom were *Eye-witneſſes* of all that was done; and others received the Relation from their concurrent Teſtimony) who continually expoſed themſelves (as is moſt notorious and undenied) to all manner of Perſecutions and Torments, and even to Death itſelf, only upon the Account of this ſame Teſtimony which they gave to the Reſurrection of Chriſt, and all other the Miracles which were wrought by him and his Diſciples for the Confirmation of that Doctrin and Religion which they taught and preached: And that ſuch great Numbers of Men ſhould readily undergo ſo many great and bitter Sufferings, without either inquiring into, or being well aſſured of the Facts upon which all they ſuffered for entirely depended, is a thing in itſelf, altogether incredible.

Some, who are obſtinate, will perhaps ſay, that if *Chriſtianity* may be proved by Miracles, ſo may

Popery too: For the Papists with great Assurance make that Plea, even for those Doctrines and Practices in particular, whereby they are distinguished from other Christians: But (to say nothing yet a while of the monstrous Absurdities of Popery; which to an impartial Man must still appear very hard if not impossible to be digested, whatever Proof we may suppose them to have for their *Miracles*; to say nothing of this, I say) between the Miracles that were wrought for the establishing of Christianity; and those which the Church of *Rome* alledges in behalf of her peculiar Tenets, there are these four very remarkable Differences.

First, The Christian Miracles are all of them grave and serious; the Popish ones generally are trifling and childish; as will abundantly appear to every one who compares the four *Gospels* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, with the *Legends* and Lives of the [pretended] Saints received in the Church of *Rome*.

Secondly, The Christian Miracles were immediately published to the World, as soon as they were wrought; whereby all Men had an Opportunity of making a full and impartial Inquiry into the Truth and Reality of them: Whereas the most considerable of the Popish ones have scarce ever been mentioned, until some Generations after the Time that they are pretended to have been performed.

Thirdly, The Christian Miracles were immediately and publickly attested by a sufficient Number of Witnesses; all of them Men of great Honesty and Simplicity; who neither would nor could have contrived such a Forgery; by which (if a Forgery it were) they could not have the least Prospect of Advantage, but altogether of great and grievous Sufferings. Whereas the Popish Miracles

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Miracles have seldom been published until long after the Death of the pretended Witnesses; and even those Witnesses such as were no Sufferers, but Gainers by their Testimony, and therefore, for that as well as other Reasons, the more liable to be suspected.

Fourthly, So convincing was the Evidence, which every where was offered for the Christian Miracles, that they almost universally gained Belief, even from Enemies as well as Friends; nor did any of those who antiently opposed our Religion, deny or gainsay the Matters of Fact; but only endeavoured to bring other Solutions for the Argument which the primitive Christians brought from that Topick; whereas the Popish Miracles have been so far from gaining Credit (even in point of Fact) among their Adversaries; that their own sober and learned Men do not appear to believe the Truth of much the greatest Part of them.

Let these four things then (in themselves sufficiently notorious, and which my intended Brevity will not allow me to enlarge upon) be thoroughly and seriously considered; and it will soon appear that altho' the Argument from Miracles holds strongly and unanswerably in the behalf of Christianity; yet nothing can fairly be drawn from the like Topick for the Establishment of Popery.

§. XVIII. At last then I am come to the fourth Argument, whereby we prove that Christianity is from God; and that is drawn from the great *Success* which is met with at its first Appearance in the World.

I grant indeed that *Success alone* is not sufficient to prove the Truth or Goodness of any Cause whatsoever: It being beyond Contradiction notorious, that Error and Villany have sometimes been very successful. But where a Religion has
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all other the Marks of Truth; and has with great Success been propagated, not only by Persons in an outward Appearance unfit for such a Work, and without the least Prospect of any temporal Encouragement; but also in opposition to many grievous and bitter Persecutions, by the greatest Powers upon Earth, universally raised against it: The very *Success*, I say, of such a Religion as this, adds no small Weight to the other Arguments, that are brought to prove the Divine Authority of it; and in such a Case, it may well be supposed that it is God who gives Men Power to perform a Work to which of themselves they are altogether unequal; and when *vast Multitudes* every where not only forsake their old Religion in which they had been bred, and embrace this which is but newly preached amongst them; but also readily and willingly undergo Poverty, Banishment, Torments, and even Death itself for the sake of it; it may well be look'd upon as a good Argument, not only of the strong and clear Conviction which they have of the Truth of it, but also of a more than ordinary Support which they receive from the Hand of God, whereby they are enabled for its sake to bear such things as seem to surpass the very Sterngth of human Nature.

Now this is exactly the Case of Christianity: Its own intrinsick Wisdom and Goodness, together with the Prophecies accomplished, and Miracles wrought for its Establishment, do give it all the Marks of Truth, that can reasonably be desired; it was at first preached by Men, both poor and illiterate, all of them except *St. Paul*; and he too a Man but of a very small figure in proportion to so great a Work: And so far was it from meeting with any temporal Encouragement in the

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Sect. XIX. *by the Test of* REASON. 67

the World? that for about three hundred Years together it was always discountenanced, and often most inhumanly persecuted by the Civil Powers: Yet still the more it was persecuted the more it prevailed; and the Loss it sustained by the Death of every Martyr was doubly and trebly repaired by the new Converts that daily came over to it: Until at last, without any other visible Force but that of constant Preaching and holy Living, it triumphed over all the Opposition that was given to it, by the Learning of the Jewish Doctors and Heathen Philosophers; the Rage and Fury of the common People, and the Swords and Faggots, the Racks and Gibbets, and all other Instruments of Death that every where were prepared for it by the Power of the Civil Magistrate: Nor could any thing stop its Progress until it got full and quiet Possession of all the vast Dominions of the *Roman* Empire, and carried its Conquests (how far indeed, for want of Records, we cannot certainly determine; but) very much farther, we are sure, than ever the *Romans* were able to extend their Power. Now altho' we grant Success alone is not sufficient to prove the Truth of any Religion; yet such wonderful Success as this, in Conjunction with the other Arguments that I have mentioned, we take to be an abundant Proof that *Christianity is from God, and consequently is the true Religion.*

§. XIX. But there are some Difficulties that certain Men do start upon this Occasion; to which it will here be expected that an Answer should be given.

First, Since God is no Respector of Persons, Acts
 x. 34. how comes it to pass that all Nations and People have not alike had the Gospel preached, and the Benefits of it thereby offered unto them? Why did not the Apostles, or others sent by them, travel

travel into every Part of the World alike? Examine the Account that Ecclesiastical History gives us of the Progress of Christianity, and you will find, that tho' in a few Years it prevailed very much almost throughout the *Roman* Empire; yet many other Countries there were, that for divers Centuries heard little or nothing of it: Nor does it appear to this very Day to have been at all made known to the North-East Part of *Tartary* and great Part of *America*; and but very imperfectly in many vast Tracts of *India*, *China*, and the Countries thereunto near adjoining. Now if God Almighty designed Christianity for the common Benefit of all Mankind, and no Man can receive the Benefit of a Religion without some competent Knowledge of it; what imaginable Reason can be given why this Knowledge should not fairly be offered to every particular Man; and that in such a manner as to leave him no room to complain of any but himself: If, by not embracing of the Religion, he fall short of the Reward that it proposes to its Votaries and Professors?

Upon this Objection the Adversaries of Christianity lay no small Weight; and many weak Christians at the first are puzzled and perplexed at it: I have therefore concealed no part of the Strength of it; and do think that the Force of it will be wholly taken away if we duly consider these two things:

First, That it is no Argument in the least to prove, that God has not done a thing, because we are not able to assign a Reason why he has not done more. Why did not he, whose Wisdom and Power are infinite, create ten thousand Millions of Worlds? (And if he had done so, the Question might still as well be asked, Why did he not create ten times as many more?) We know not. But will
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it therefore follow, that he made never a one at all? Why did he not make this World much better than it is; and endow each particular Creature with greater Perfections than what they now have? (And whatever of this sort he had done, still the Question would recur, Why did he not do more?) Of this we are altogether ignorant: But will this, without more ado, overturn all the Arguments that are brought to prove, That the World was framed and fashioned by him? And because we know not why he did not think fit, either to send Christ sooner into the World, or to cause Christianity to be taught, as particularly to each Man every where, as Children at School do learn their Lessons; Will this destroy the Force of all or any of those Proofs, that are brought for the Truth and Divine Authority of that Religion? As far as an Argument concludes well, it ought to be received: But to reject what is solidly and substantially proved, only because something beyond that cannot be proved, or is not true, is altogether absurd and unreasonable.

But still you will say, Why should God punish Men for not being Christians, if the Gospel has either not at all, or not sufficiently been preached or proposed to them? I answer, That this is not the Reason why he will punish such Men: For (which is the

Second thing to be considered) no Truth can be more evident by its own Light than this, That *God, who is infinitely just, good, and gracious, will never punish any Man for not doing an impossible thing*; and therefore tho' we know not how far, or for what several Reasons he may punish those who never have had the Knowledge of the Gospel offered to them; yet to imagine that he will punish them, *for not being Christians*, is a palpable Mistake

Mistake: It being altogether impossible for a Man to become a Christian, if no sufficient Instruction of that sort has ever been offered to him.

§. XX. Another Difficulty to be cleared up, is this; That many Men have in all Ages opposed Christianity, many have corrupted it; or great Disputes, at least, there have been, and still are, which are the true and genuine Doctrines and Precepts of it; in many Places where once it wholly prevailed, it has now lost its Ground, and given way to Mahometanism; and among those who profess it, vast Multitudes there are who lead their Lives almost in a direct Opposition to it. Now, if the Evidence for this Religion has all along from the beginning, been so very great and clear, as I have endeavoured to represent it; how is it possible that so many Men did, and still do resist the Force of it, and chuse another and far worse Profession before it? How could it come to be thus adulterated, as we find it is? (For among the many contending and contrary Parties, all but one must, more or less, be Corruptors of that Christianity which in common they pretend to.) And, lastly, If the Rewards it proposes, and Punishments it threatens, are so certain, as they must be, if the Religion itself be undoubtedly of Divine Authority; it seems to be beyond Imagination itself, that any one Man in his Wits should believe this, and yet continue to lead a wicked and ungodly Life.

In answer hereunto, let it be considered, That God having made Man a rational Creature, and endowed him with a Power of Choice; does not irresistably compel him to any thing, only *sets before him* Good and Evil, *Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing*, Deut. xxx. 19. with sufficient Motives

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to chuse the one, and reject the other; but with full and free Liberty, at the same time, to do which of the two he pleases; and therefore if never so many Men do oppose or persecute the true Religion, notwithstanding the most convincing Proofs that are offered in the behalf of it; or having embraced it, do yet live contrary to the Rules and Precepts of it, or even again renounce or forsake it; all this is only an Argument of their own Pride, Covetousness, Sensuality, or whatever else it is that they suffer to prevail in them in opposition to their Duty; but makes nothing at all against Religion, which ought always to be judged of, by the direct Proof and Evidence that is brought for it, and not barely by the Reception it meets with in the World; especially if we consider how very often Mens Lusts, Passions, and Prejudices are permitted to get almost an entire Ascendant over their Reason.

§. XXI. If it be here demanded, Why did not God at first create, and afterwards preserve Man in greater Perfection, as to his intellectual Powers, than it seems he has done? Why does he not give him an Understanding as well qualified to discern Truth from Error, and Good from Evil, as a good Eye is to distinguish Light from Darkeness; and also a Will immutably fixt upon the former, and always averse to the latter? For if this had been done, the Consequence would be, that every Man would most certainly embrace the true Religion, as soon as it should be proposed to him; and when he had once embraced it, would always retain and live according to it.

I answer, *First*, That whatever intellectual or other Perfections God might have given unto Mankind; as long as they come short of being infinite, (of which no created Being is, I suppose,

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or can be capable) there would still be room for this same Question, *Why has not God given them greater Perfections?* For the greater Perfections a rational Creature is endowed with, the greater degree of Happiness is he capable of: And since it is natural for every such Creature to desire to be as happy as possible can be; if the Will of the Almighty Creator is not to set bounds unto that Desire, and to be the Rule of it; a way is opened for a perpetual Expostulation of all the rational part of the Creation, against their Creator: *The Thing formed may for ever say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* Rom. ix. 20. And Angels as well as Men may say to God, *Why hast thou not given us still a greater degree of Perfection, that so we might be able to attain to the like degree of Happiness?*

Bet, *Secondly*, altho' it is altogether inconsistent with God's infinite Goodness, that he should create any Sort of Beings; and without any Fault by them committed, should put them into a State of unavoidable Misery; yet, on the other hand, it is most certain, that he neither is nor can be a *Debtor* to any of his Creatures, beyond what he, by his own voluntary Promise, at any time thinks fit to make himself: And therefore whatever Portion of Good he is pleased to bestow on any of them, it is an Instance of his Bounty and Beneficence to the Work of his Hands: And as he who has received but one Talent, is accountable for no more but what he has received; so is he as truly obliged to be content with, and thankful for it, as any other that is entrusted with a greater Number.

And here let me a little expostulate this matter with those Men, who, by such sort of Demands
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and Objections as these, do presume to arraign and call in question the infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness* even of God himself. Of both these Attributes, as well as of his Almighty *Power*, he has given us abundant Evidence both in the Structure of the World, and the Revelation and Propagation of the Christian Religion: But, say some, the World is not as well contrived, nor the several Parts of it, and Beings that belong to it, as perfect as they might have been: And hence they would infer, either that it was not made by God at all, or that he is not as wise and good as we would represent him. And the like Objection they frame against Christianity; because Multitudes that profess it live contrary to it; and many Millions have gone off the Stage, and still continue to do so, without ever having had the least Knowledge or Instruction in it.

But what intolerable Arrogance is this, thus to deny, or even doubt of the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God, (for which such unanswerable Arguments are produced) only because our short and narrow Understanding is not able to fathom or comprehend them? Do we know the *utmost Design* that God has in framing of the *Universe*, and each and every Part thereof, with all and every the Creatures that are, or, for ought we know, may be in the several Regions of it, and the farthest Extent of that Subordination, which all these Creatures have one to another, in order to that Design? And if every created Being has Perfection sufficient for that end, for which God made it, is not this enough for that Station in which it is placed? No doubt but God, if he so pleased, might have made the craggy Hills and Mountains, most fruitful and delightful Plains; but if he has thought fit to have these great Unevennesses in the Earth,

for the better supplying of the whole with Rain, Fountains and Rivers; dare we take upon us to find fault with his Workmanship? He might have caused the Earth to produce not only all sorts of Fruit and Corn, without any Tillage, but also Houses ready fitted for the Reception and Habitation of Man: But shall we grumble, because matters are so ordered that we cannot have these things without the Intervention of our own Care and Industry? He might have given rational Souls to the Brutes, and created Man with all the Perfections of an Angel; but if he has thought fit to make them just such as they are, that the Beasts may be the more serviceable to Man, and Man undergo a Trial here, in order to his Reward or Punishment hereafter; ought not this rather to raise our Admiration of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, than to move us in the least to call them in question? And lastly, (to omit all other Instances) it was and is always in his Power to give every Man throughout the whole World, most full and perfect Information of all the Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity, together with the Grounds and Reasons of them: But he has not done so; and who can tell whether he intends, at the last Day, to call any Man to an Account for more than what he has received? That is to say, for the Abilities and Opportunities, which in his Life-time he had, of gaining Knowledge of the Truth, and putting that Knowledge into Practice, in that Place and Station wherein he in his Providence has thought fit to place him.

To conclude this Point: If Man will but allow that God is or may be very much wiser than himself, he will easily be content with those most pregnant Proofs he has so clearly given us, both

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of his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, as well as Power; and whatever comes to pass that human Reason is not able otherwise to account for, he will always believe it to be designed and directed by God to some good End, in order to the better and more regular Administration of the Universe; altho' we at present have no way of coming to the particular Knowledge of it. A thousand things may, with the greatest Justice and Prudence, be transacted and done by a Prince and his Council, of which every private Man, tho' of very good Understanding in his own proper Affairs, may yet, from the outward Appearance, be able to frame no competent Judgment; and for any of us to call in question the Wisdom or Goodness of God's Administration, (of which the Reasons are altogether beyond our Capacity) is not only very great Presumption, but altogether as foolish also and absurd, as if a deaf Man should pass his Judgment on the Distinction of Sounds, or a Man born blind on the Difference of Light and Colours.

§. XXII. But the Presumption of some Men goes yet farther, and demands, What Necessity there is of any Revealed Religion at all? Does not Reason, if duly attended to, most certainly inform us of the Being of God, together with his Attributes of Wisdom, Power, Justice and Goodness? And may we not from these Attributes as evidently infer that his Will also is, as far as we are concerned in it; that is to say, as far as it is either a Rule of Duty to us, or a Ground to hope for a Reward, if we obey; and to expect Punishment, in case we are disobedient? Read those Authors who have learnedly and judiciously handled these Subjects, and you will find the Truth and Authority of *Natural Religion* so fully

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demonstrated;

demonstrated; the Duties of it, as they respect both God and Man, so clearly described, and their Obligation so evidently proved; as to require nothing more but Conformity and Obedience thereunto, to render Man as happy as he is capable of in this Life; and sufficiently to qualify him for whatever farther Happiness God hath been pleased to design for him in that which is to come: And all this from the Principles of Reason alone, and antecedent to any manner of Revelation. Since then the very utmost Design of Religion is to make Men happy here, and qualify them for Happiness in the Life to come; and all this may sufficiently be provided for by Reason alone, if every Man would but impartially follow it; why should we imagine that God hath made any supernatural Revelation of Religion at all, since the utmost End that he can be supposed thereby to propose to himself, may as well be accomplished by every Man's attending to that Light of Reason, which his Creator hath implanted in his very Nature?

But suppose we were altogether unable to discover the least Necessity of Revelation; would it follow from hence that therefore there neither is, nor can be any such thing? Whether God hath been ever pleased to make any supernatural Revelation of himself or his Will, is a Question of *Fact*; and if a *Fact* be sufficiently proved by proper Arguments, that is to say, by the Testimony of unexceptionable Witnesses, is it reasonable for any Man to say, that the thing is not so, only because he cannot tell why it should be so? And may not God in his infinite Wisdom see very just Causes for the doing of many things, of which we may be altogether ignorant? Whosoever doth but a little consider both the Clearness and Boundless-

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ness of God's Knowledge, and compare it with the Darkeness and Narrowness of Man's Understanding, can never sure have the Confidence to make such sort of Objections as these.

However, let us yield a little to debate this matter with the Objectors. There is no doubt to be made but God, if he had so pleased, might much farther have enlightened every Man's natural Understanding than what he hath done, and thereby alone, without any supernatural Revelation, have given them such an Insight into Things divine, as that their Reason alone might have been a sufficient Rule both of Faith and Practice to them. But the Question is not at present, *What God might have done, but what he actually hath done*; and if he hath thought fit to superadd to *Reason* another and farther Rule of *Revelation*, will any Man venture to say that he hath not sufficient Authority for so doing?

But where is the *Necessity*, say they, of Revelation, since God might have governed the whole World as it is manifest he hath done a great part of it, without it? And shall we suppose the all-wise God to have done any thing that is *unnecessary*, or (in other terms) in vain?

I answer, That if by *Necessity* here is meant an *absolute and unavoidable Necessity*, it is most evident that God (whose Freedom of Action is essential to his infinite Perfection) has done very many things without any such *Necessity* as this incumbent on him: Nor can any other Account be given, why he made the World, and all the several sorts of Beings that are in it, and endowed them severally with such various Properties and Powers as are found to be in them? But that it was his own Good-will and Pleasure so to do; and that in order to such Ends and Purposes, as

he, in his infinite Wisdom, thought fit to lay down and establish.

But if by *Necessity*, no more is meant but only a great *Congruity* and Aptitude, in order to the bringing about some wise and good End, then, in answer to the Question proposed, I return these following things :

First, It is not to be doubted, but that God may have many wise and great Ends to accomplish; and may adapt the most proper means to each several End, far beyond what we poor shallow Mortals are able (at least whilst we are in this Life) to comprehend. Although therefore we could see no manner of Necessity for Revelation, in order to any End that we can imagine, it will not follow but that God may know it to be highly necessary, and by much the most proper means for the bringing to Effect certain Designs of his own, which in themselves are most wise and good; although as yet perhaps altogether unknown, or unfathomable to us.

Secondly, As far as the Ends which God hath proposed to himself are made known to us, or we are able to dive into them, it evidently appears, that those several Revelations, which he hath been pleased to make of himself and of his Will to the World, were in their own nature very proper, (and in that Sense *necessary*) in order to the Accomplishment of them.

All sober Men, who own that there is a God, allow him, at the same time, to be infinitely *Wise, Good* and *Just*; and therefore whatever he does, in pursuance of any *one* of these Attributes, must always be supposed to be fully consistent with the *other two*.

From the Relation also that rational Creatures bear both to God, and to each other; it is granted

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ed that there arise certain unchangeable Rules, or Measures of Moral Good and Evil, which we call *Natural Laws*.

Whatever is morally evil God cannot do, because it is directly contrary to his very Nature and essential Attributes.

Now God having made Man a rational as well as sensitive Creature, and given him an immortal Soul, as well as a mortal Body, one End or Design, which his Wisdom and Goodness are always supposed to have had in the Creation of such a Being, was to put him into a Capacity of being eternally happy in another Life, after this shall have an end.

One essential Part of the Happiness of a rational Creature, as such, necessarily consists in the Satisfaction that arises from his having voluntarily given Obedience to such *natural Laws*, or *unchangeable Rules of Good*, as are above-mentioned; for where Reason exerts itself, and this Satisfaction is wanting, Remorse of Conscience must arise, which is always destructive of Happiness.

And if a rational Creature obstinately continues in Disobedience to those Laws, without any true Repentance or Amendment, it would be contrary to God's essential *Justice* to make such a Creature eternally happy, if we could suppose him, while he so continued, to be capable of it.

Granting then what both Sides agree in, That God at first sent Man into this World as a Candidate for eternal Happiness, to be obtained by his Obedience to these same Laws; and endowed him with Reason and Understanding sufficient to make a full Discovery of them; if all the Revelations that he hath thought fit to make, should appear only to be *consistent* with this Design; even this alone were sufficient abundantly to justify him
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(whose Authority over his Creatures hath no other Limits but his own Goodness) in the making of them.

Let all the Revelations then that God hath made (as they are recorded both in the Old and New Testament) be strictly examined and enquired into; and what even seeming *Inconsistency* can there be found between any of them, and any one of those *natural* and *unchangeable* Laws, which by Reason we are able to discover?

But you will say, that there are many things in the *Old* and some in the *New Testament*, which though not *inconsistent with*, yet are altogether *superadded* to the *natural Laws*: I grant it, but then let it be considered,

First, That God hath an undoubted Authority to lay what *positive Injunctions* he thinks fit upon his own Creatures: Nor can such *Injunctions* be any other way made known unto us than by Revelation.

Secondly, That when once such *Injunctions* are made known, our Obedience to them becomes a Duty, by virtue of that general Sanction of the natural Law, That *God is to be obeyed in all things*.

Thirdly, That most, if not all, of those *positive Injunctions*, which God hath at any Time been pleased to lay on Men, have always been designed, and in their own nature fit, for the better Enforcement of the Duties of the *natural Law*; either by awakening them into a more awful Apprehension of the Divine Majesty, or being as it were a Fence about certain Precepts of the *natural Law*, to keep them at the greater Distance from the Transgression of them.

Fourthly, That a very great and most material (that is to say, all that we call the moral) Part of whatever Revelation God hath been pleased to make,

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make, is no more but a clear and full Declaration of those very Duties, which by the *natural Law* we are obliged to perform; and consequently no small Help to our Reason; which, wherever this Light of Revelation hath been wanting, hath not been sufficient to keep Men from the most great and gross Absurdities in matters that relate to God, and Religion.

And lastly, Whereas it is very hard to suppose, that such a Creature as Man should take much Pains, and encounter many Difficulties in the Discharge of his Duty, unless he were awed on the one hand by the Fear of Punishment; and on the other, encouraged by the Hope of some Assistance here, and a sufficient Reward hereafter; and the Doctrines of God's punishing the wicked, and both assisting and rewarding of good Men, are but somewhat obscurely suggested to us by Reason alone: It certainly must be allowed as highly agreeable to God's Design in the Creation of Mankind, that these things should be more clearly and fully made known unto us by Revelation; thereby to work the more effectually both upon our Hopes and our Fears, in order to keep us up close to our Duty, notwithstanding the many Difficulties and Discouragements which we often meet with in the Performance of it.

True, it may be you will say, that God hath sufficient Power and Authority, not only by Revelation to assist our Reason; but also by the same Means to make known Truths, and lay positive Injunctions on us in Matters of Religion, beyond what Reason of itself could possibly discover; may well enough be granted; but still the Difficulty remains, and it will be asked, Why this Revelation (if any such there hath been) hath not from time to time been universally made
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to all Mankind; but always hath, and still is confined to so small a Number?

But this Question plainly supposes the *Necessity* of Revelation in the Sense that we maintain it; that is to say, the great Congruity and Usefulness of it; and demands only why the Extent of it is not universal to each particular Man. To which having already given, I think, a sufficient Answer, I shall not tire the Reader with an unnecessary Repetition of it.

Only this I think I may very well add, that it is at least highly probable, that almost all the Knowledge which we have in the World even of natural Law and Religion is wholly owing to Revelation. As in Geometry (for Example) a most difficult Theoreme when it is once demonstrated, is so plain to the Reason of every Man who understands the Demonstration, that every Man is very apt to think that he could himself have found it out; and yet thousands of good Geometricians there are, and have been, who never would [of themselves] have found out the Demonstrations of that Science, or have had any Notion of them, if they had not been taught by others; so altho' the Doctrines and Rules of *natural Law and Religion* are, in my Opinion, demonstrably deducive from such Principles as every Man in his Wits must allow to be true; yet, supposing the Reason of Mankind to be just the same as now it is, it is very plain that few, or perhaps none, would have made any Deduction, or at least have gone very far in it, if the Minds of some Men had not been enlightened by Revelation; and that Light in a greater or less Measure derived down unto others.

When God first made Man he did not leave him only to gather what Knowledge he could by the Strength of his own Reason, from the Works of

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of the Creation and the Order and Course of Nature; but gave him what Instruction was farther necessary by immediate Revelation, *Gen. i. 28. &c.* whereby *Adam* was also enabled to teach and instruct, and propagate Knowledge amongst his Posterity.

This way of teaching us by immediate Revelation God was pleased, even after the Fall of Man, in some Measure to continue; as appears in the Account which the Holy Scripture gives us of *Cain* and *Abel*, *Noah*, *Abraham*, *Joseph*, *Moses*, and the Prophets; and after some Intermiſſion, to renew the ſame by *Jeſus Chriſt* and his Apoſtles.

And that ſome Footſteps of ſome of the Revelations [at leaſt] did, almoſt as univerſally as Mankind, ſpread themſelves, and for a very long time remain throughout the whole World, appears I think moſt plainly from that Cuſtom of worſhipping the Deity by *Sacrifices*, which every where was retained amongst all Nations, as far as we have any Account of them in ancient Hiſtory, whether true or fabulous. Of which univerſal Cuſtom, every where prevailing amongst the moſt diſtant People, no rational Account can be given from any of the Principles of *Natural Religion*; nor indeed any other but this one (that will bear the utmoſt Teſt) *viz.* that it was firſt immediately taught unto Man by God himſelf; and then derived down and propagated from one Generation to another.

For to ſay nothing of *Cain* and *Abel*, (*Gen. iv. 3, 4.*) or what paſſed before the Flood; preſently after it we find *Noah* (who had an immediate Intercourſe with God by Revelation) *building an Altar*, and *offering Burnt-offering upon it*, *Gen. viii. 20.* and what he thus did himſelf, it cannot be doubted but he taught his Children alſo to do:

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Not to mention *Abraham*; from whom not only the *Ishmaelites* and *Israelites* (who were very numerous) but also several other Nations sprang, by those Children which his last Wife *Keturah* bare unto him, *Gen. xxv. 2.*

That some Knowledge also of the Religion of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, *Joseph*, *Moses*, and the *Israelites* (which came to them by Revelation) must needs be propagated amongst the neighbouring Nations, where they dwelt, or any of them travelled; and particularly amongst the *Egyptians* and *Phenicians* (from whence it is notorious that all the *Grecian* Learning was derived) is what no one sure will deny; that the *Israelitish* Religion became farther known in the World by the several Conquests, Dispersions, and Captivities of that People, by the Translation of their Scriptures into the *Greek* Tongue (very generally understood) about three hundred Years before the coming of Christ, is very natural to believe. And *Lastly*, that Christianity was in a few Years far and near propagated in the World, is as well known as any thing in History.

Now wherever any Knowledge of the things in the above-mentioned Revelations or any of them was propagated or received; notwithstanding the many Errors, Corruptions and Fables, which were therewith mixed, yet still it served as a Ferment to stir up natural Conscience, and preserve some Sense of Religion amongst those Nations. And on the contrary, wherever we find a People to have lost all Sense of Revelation and revealed Truths, scarce any Footsteps even of natural Religion are to be found amongst them.

Thus, for Example, it is notorious that the ancient fabulous Theology, received by the *Grecians*, and from thence derived to the *Romans*, was
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in a great Measure a Corruption of, together with many Additions to some Part of those Revelations, which are contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, for the Proof of which we need go no farther than the History of the Creation and Deluge, as it is related in the very beginning of *Ovid's Metamorphosis*; and how great a Sense of Religion and Conscience, the Apprehension of these and such like Things, kept up in both those People, is too well known from their Histories to need any farther Proof here. And after that Christianity began to be made known throughout the *Roman Empire*; it is remarkable that even the Heathen Writers exalted both Piety and Morality, to a higher and more spiritual Degree, than any of their Predecessors (though Men of as great Parts and Learning) had ever done before them: Which can probably be attributed to no other Cause but the Acquaintance which they had with some of the Notions of the Gospel.

On the contrary, they who have travelled into those Countries, where the ancient Natives have lost all Sense or Apprehension of any such Thing as Revelation, do assure us, that they find among them so very little Sign of any Worship of God, or Footstep even of natural Religion, that it is at least very doubtful whether they have any manner of Sense of God or Religion at all; of which (to omit others) the People called *Hattentots* at the *Cape of Good Hope*, are a very remarkable Instance.

I shall close my Answer to all the foregoing Objections with this one Consideration, which I take to be abundantly sufficient to surmount all the Difficulties that are or can be contained in them; namely that not only Revelation, but in a great Measure even Reason also, from the unequal Distribution of Good and Evil in this Life, assure

us that there is a Life to come, and a great Day of Account in which Rewards and Punishments shall be most exactly dispensed; and all the [seeming] Inequalities of this World so thoroughly rectified and made even, that Virtue which hath sometimes here been oppressed shall have no farther Reason to complain, or bemoan itself; nor prosperous Vice any longer ground to triumph and rejoice. Then it shall appear to all the rational part of the Creation, that the *Judge of all the Earth* doth nothing but what is *right*, Gen. xviii. 25. And as the *good and faithful Servant* (Mat. xxv. 21.) shall be most amply rewarded; so the *wicked and slothful one* (ver. 26.) shall be sufficiently punished; not for that he had but *one Talent* (ver. 15.) committed to him, or *Ability* to manage no more, (neither of which are laid to his Charge as a Fault) but purely and only because he did not put his *Lord's Money to the Exchangers*, ver. 27. that is to say, did not make that due Improvement of the Stock, with which he was entrusted, that he might and ought to have done. Then *that Servant which knew his Lord's Will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit Things [in themselves] worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him [alone] shall much be required*, Luke xii. 47, 48. And as many as have sinned without [the Revealed] Law [of God] shall also perish without [being judged by that] Law; and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law, Rom. ii. 12. For when the Gentiles, which have not the [Revealed] Law, do by [the Light of] nature the Things contained in the Law, these having not the [Revealed] Law, are a Law unto themselves, ver. 14.

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This World is but as a short Prelude to that vast Eternity that is to follow ; and we being at present on the obscure side of the Curtain, cannot make a full and perfect Discovery of what is yet in a great measure concealed on the other side of it. But from the infinite Wisdom, Justice and Goodness of God, we may with all assurance conclude, that whenever the Scene shall be opened, and a full Discovery made to us of all that is to come, as far as we are concerned in the Knowledge of it, all Things will appear so right and equitable, and what comes after so exactly fitted to whatever hath gone before, that without the least Scruple, Doubt, or Suspicion, we shall all with one accord cry out, that *the Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether*, Ps. xix. 9.

§. XXIII. But it may be objected, That there are very sufficient Arguments to prove, that the Jewish Religion was from God ; and yet we maintain that it is superseded by Christianity ; How then do we know, but that there is some other Religion, that comes into the Place of the Christian ; as the Christian has done into that of the Jewish ? This indeed is the Pretence of the Mahometans ; but the Answer to it is very easy.

Whatsoever Things are of moral and eternal Goodness ; whatsoever Things are in their own nature *honest, just, pure and lovely*, Phil. iv. 8. are forever the same, and unchangeable, and are all transmitted from Judaism into Christianity, and there contained in the highest degree of Perfection. But, for such as are only of positive Institution, as they are always supposed to be in themselves alterable by the same Authority that first appointed them, so it is no less than impossible

sible that they should be all the same in the Christian, as they were in the Jewish Religion. The *Israelites*, for Example, who lived within a small Tract of Ground, were obliged by their Law to perform several Acts of Obedience, and Worship, at certain Times of the Year, at no other Place but the House of God; which for many Years was the Temple of *Jerusalem*, where they who lived at the remoter Parts of the Earth, could not possibly give their Attendance: And this alone (to omit many other Considerations) is enough to shew, that the positive Part of the Mosaick Law, was only intended for that one People; and that too no longer than they should remain distinct and separate from all other Nations. Moreover, in all the Revelations that God was pleased to make of himself, even from the very time of the Fall of Man, he still thought fit to give plain Intimations of farther Discoveries that were to be made of his Will to the World: As appears by the Promises made by him, That *the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head*, Gen. iii. 15. That *in the Seed of Abraham all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, Gen. xxii. 18. That *Shiloh should come, and unto him should the gathering of the People be*, ch. xlix. 10. That God would raise up unto his People a Prophet, *like unto Moses, whom they should hear*, Deut. xviii. 15, 18. And in a word, from all these Predictions in the Old Testament, which the Jews, as well as Christians, always did, and still do understand to foretel the coming of the Messiah; who was to *tell them all Things*, John iv. 25. Whereas in all that Declaration of his Will, which *in these last Days* God has been pleased to make unto the World by his Son, Heb. i. 2. there is not the least Suggestion or Intimation of any new or farther

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farther Revelation of his Will to be made; but altogether the contrary: As abundantly appears from many Passages in the New Testament; particularly, from the Promise of our Blessed Saviour, to be with his Disciples *always even unto the end of the World*, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20.) in the preaching of the *Gospel*, which he had commanded them to *teach all Nations*; and above all, from the frequent Assurance he has given us, both by himself and his Apostles, that all who shall receive his Doctrine, and conform themselves to it, shall *inherit eternal Life*, Mark xvi. 15, 16. John iii. 15, 16. which being the utmost Reward that Man is capable of receiving, shews, that that Obedience, to which this Reward is annexed, is the utmost that God Almighty does or ever will require, from any Man whatsoever. So that if once we allow the Christian Religion to be from God, (as I think the Proofs brought for it are beyond all imaginable Exceptions) we must of necessity also own, that this is the last Revelation of himself, or his Will, that ever he designs to make to the World, and consequently that all Pretences to new and farther Discoveries in Religion, can be no better than Imposture or Delusion.

§. XXIV. I proceed to the third Question; namely, *Why we are Protestants and not Papists; of the Reformed rather than the Roman Religion?*

Whatsoever Controversies have been raised, or different Opinions at any time maintained in the World, concerning the divine Inspiration, Authority, Perfection, Interpretation, or Perspicuity of the Holy Scriptures; yet all who have ever professed Christianity with the least degree of Sobriety (whether Papists or Protestants, or of what other Denomination soever they have been) have constantly
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and fully agreed in this ; that whatever Doctrines or Rules of Life are clearly and plainly taught and contained in those sacred Writings ; and are altogether agreeable to the main Tenor and Design of them ; ought always to be received as true and obligatory to every Man as far as he has the Opportunity of coming to the Knowledge of them. Now the whole and intire Religion of a Protestant is no more but this ; to believe and profess the Articles of the Apostles Creed, to be duly baptized with Water according to Christ's Institution, to lead a holy and virtuous Life in the diligent Practice of the Duties of Piety and Morality, frequently to participate of that holy Ordinance of Bread and Wine, which takes its Name from Christ's appointing it at his last Supper ; and lastly to give all due Obedience to that lawful Authority both civil and ecclesiastical, which, in the Course of God's Providence, is placed over him ; nor does any sober Protestant, that I know of, require more than this, as an essential part of Religion, or absolutely necessary to the Salvation of any Christian ; and that all this, is clearly, plainly, and beyond all Contradiction, contained and taught in the Holy Scriptures, and altogether agreeable to the main Tenor and Design of them, is not only most evident to every one who reads them : But also fully and freely owned and acknowledged by all those who are of the Church of *Rome* ; which therefore we take to be a very sufficient Reason why we are of the Protestant Religion. For whatever Objection may be pretended against the *Name* Protestant, as being new and unheard-of till of late Years ; yet nothing of that Nature can be more evident than that the *Religion* which we profess, as I have but now described

scribed it, is as antient as the first Propagation of the Gospel by the Apostles ; being all of it most plainly contained in the Holy Scriptures.

It may perhaps be objected that the Thirty Nine Articles, received by our Church, are expressly called *Articles of Religion ; and the Confessions*, by other Protestant Churches published, are usually stiled *Confessions of Faith* : Now that these *Articles* and *Confessions* do all of them contain much more than what I have but now set down as the whole Religion of a Protestant, is evident, and accordingly acknowledged ; and if so, the Consequence must necessarily be, that the Faith or Religion of a Protestant includes a great deal more than what I have described to be in it.

To this the Answer will not be difficult if we consider that these Words *Faith* and *Religion* are sometimes taken in a larger, and sometimes in a more contracted and limited Signification ; sometimes they are put to signify that whole System of Doctrine which is authentickly received by any Church ; tho' not all of it, as absolutely necessary to Church-Communion or eternal Salvation ; yet as sound and true, and altogether agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, or whatever Rule of Faith or Religion is received, and owned by them : And in this Acceptation of the Words, the Faith or Religion of a Protestant may be said to contain more than what I have mentioned to be in it : But these same Words, as they are implied, tho' not express'd in my Text, are to be understood in the strictest Signification, to denote no more than what is ordinarily necessary to the Salvation of a Christian. My Text requires no more from us, but that we should be *ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us ; or in other Terms, why we hope to be*
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saved in and by that Faith and Religion which we profess? But to give our Reasons why we believe some other Doctrines also to be *true*, (altho' we do not look upon them as ordinarily necessary to Salvation) however prudent and proper upon many occasions it may be, is yet beyond the Design of what my Text prescribes: Now if we take the Words *Faith* and *Religion* in this Sense, for no more but what we esteem to be ordinarily necessary to the Salvation of every Christian; there is no sober Protestant, that I know of, who extends his *Faith* or *Religion* beyond those Bounds within which I have but now described it; that is to say, requires any more to be explicitly believed or practised, in order to the eternal Salvation of a Christian than those several Things that I have mentioned.

But still a part of the Question continues unanswered; nor will it be thought sufficient barely for us to shew, why we embrace our own Religion: But it will farther be expected that we should give our Reasons for refusing to join with the Church of *Rome*, in the Profession or Practice of what they, beyond this, would expect and require from us.

For the clearing up therefore of what remains we must take notice that the Difference between us and the Church of *Rome*, does not consist in this, that they deny any thing to be ordinarily necessary to Salvation, which we affirm so to be, excepting only the Cup in the Holy Communion: But the great Difference between us lies in this, That in one Instance they have deprived the People of something, which by Christ's own Appointment (as we apprehend) every Christian, that comes to Years of Understanding, ought to partake of; I mean the Cup in the Holy Communion;

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nion. And in divers other Instances they have added to the Christian Religion, sundry Doctrines and Practices to be received by every one who is in Communion with them; which Doctrines and Practices we look on not only to be unnecessary; (for then perhaps we might in some Things, for Peace sake, comply with them) but to be false and unlawful; and therefore such as with a good Conscience we cannot profess, or join with them in: And if we can make this our Allegation good, it is a sufficient Reason why we neither are nor will be Papists; and so compleats our Answer to this third Question.

To come to the matter then in very few Words. If Christ's own Appointment be a sufficient ground for that Obligation that lies upon all Christians to partake (as they become capable) of the Holy Communion, (which no sober Man of the Church of *Rome* ever yet, I believe, denied;) this holds altogether as strongly for drinking of the Cup, as it does for eating of the Bread. If that Doctrine which is directly contrary to the universal Sense and Reason of all Mankind, and to divers very plain Passages of Holy Scripture; and relies only and entirely upon a pretended literal Interpretation of one single Form of Expression, (which, if it be once admitted, will as well prove our Blessed Saviour to be, in a literal Sense also, a *Vine*, a *Rock*, and a *Door*; with many other such Absurdities) if such a Doctrine as this, I say, may well be looked upon as false; then the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, as stated by the Council of *Trent*, cannot justly be received as true, and with it the Sacrifice of the Mass, and Worship of the Host, both which entirely rely upon this Doctrine, must also fall to the Ground.

Ground. If we must worship the Lord our God, and serve him only, as our Saviour expressly says, *Mat. iv. 10.* and if the first and second Commandments have still the same Meaning, and are of the same Obligation to us under the Gospel, as they were unto the *Israelites* under the Mosaick Dispensation; then the Invocation and Worship of Saints, Images and Relicks, as prescribed and practised in the Church of *Rome*, must of necessity be not only unlawful, but in a very high degree provoking unto God, who has declared himself to be a *jealous God*. The Time would fail me to speak of the Pope's Claim of Supremacy, his or his Churches pretended Infallibility, Purgatory, Indulgences, Masses for the Dead, Private Masses, Auricular Confession, Penance and Satisfaction for Sins, Merits, Works of Supererogation, Pilgrimages, and all the long Train of Errors, and unlawful or unwarrantable Practices, which under the Name and Pretence of *Apostolick and Ecclesiastical Traditions, Observation and Constitutions of the Church*, are imposed upon the Members of that Communion; and must, under the Penalty of *Anathema*, be owned and approved of by them: All which Things, being seriously weighed and considered, we cannot but conclude, that as we have sufficient ground for most heartily embracing the Christian Religion, as it is in all Protestant Churches generally professed and declared to be necessary to Salvation, so have we abundant Reason, for the rejecting all those Additions which the Church of *Rome* has made to it, or Alterations in it; and consequently for refusing to join with that Church (as long as it continues thus corrupted) in religious Worship or Communion. And thus I have at last done with the third Question proposed; namely, *Why*

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we are Protestants, and neither are nor will be Papists?

§. XXV. The fourth Question yet remains; namely, *Why we are Protestants of the Established Church, and not of any Party that dissents or divides from her?* To which, I think, a fair and satisfactory Answer may in very few Words be given.

Whatever all sober Protestants (I might add also and divers learned Papists) do maintain to be necessary to the Salvation of a Christian; we can shew it all fully and freely to be had and enjoyed in our Church. We believe and profess the true Faith, as delivered in the Creed; we are all received into the Church by Baptism; we are taught to lead holy and virtuous Lives; no part of Christ's Institution is omitted in the Administration of the Holy Communion; we have Governors, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, lawfully set over us, to whom we are required to give Obedience so far, and no farther than as the Law of God prescribes: Nor does any sober Protestant, as I have already said, require any more than this, as an essential part of Religion, or of absolute necessity to our everlasting Happiness.

Again, Some Things may perhaps be esteemed as profitable in order to Salvation, altho' they cannot be reckoned to be of absolute necessity: And whatever there is or may be of this sort, may as fully and beneficially be enjoyed amongst us, as in any Society of Christians whatsoever: He, who is a Member of our Church, may read the Holy Scriptures and other good Books, attend the Worship of God both publickly and privately, hear Sermons, keep Days of Fasting or Abstinence, and do every thing else that any way tends to his Soul's Health: And this as much
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and as often as he pleases, or can any way conduce to his spiritual or eternal Welfare.

Nor is there any thing prescribed in or required, by our Church, that is any way destructive of Salvation, or in the least a hinderance to it. Nothing but Sin can any way be a bar to the Salvation of him that professes Christianity; nor can any thing be reckoned as a Sin, 1 John iii. 4. except it be, either expressly or by good consequence, a *Transgression of the Law of God*; and *where no Law is, there is no Transgression*, Rom. iv. 15. Now however some of our Ceremonies or Ecclesiastical Constitutions may not be altogether agreeable to the Fancies or Desires of those who refuse them, and whatever other Objections are or may be artificially contrived against them; yet still there is not any one Thing required to be performed by any Member of our Communion, that can be proved to be *contrary to any of God's Laws*, or therefore can justly be condemned as any way destructive of Salvation.

Now wherever a Church is by Law established, in which all Things any way necessary or profitable to Salvation may fully and freely be had and enjoyed, and nothing at all destructive of Salvation is imposed upon any Man: From such a Church as this, no Man ought to separate; and every one that lives within the Precincts of it, ought constantly to continue in its Communion. And altho' there may be some Things in its Constitution that are not so agreeable to his particular relish; yet as long as he can without Sin, and therefore with a good Conscience, conform to them, he ought not on the Score of any such Things as these, either to break the Unity, or disturb the Peace of the Church, or refuse his Obedience to
lawful

lawful Authority: And this I take to be a sufficient and satisfactory Answer to this fourth and last Question.

§. XXVI. But there are two Difficulties that arise upon the whole, which I must endeavour to clear up before I conclude.

First then, it will perhaps be objected by those of the Church of *Rome*, that however fair and well put together, all these Arguments, brought for the Proof of our Religion, may, at the first View, appear to be; yet, when the Strength of them comes to be strictly examined, they will at best be found to be no more but *probable*, and far short of *Infallibility*: Now the highest *Probability*, say they, still includes and implies some small Degree, at least of *Uncertainty*; and consequently cannot be a Ground sufficiently firm, on which a Man may venture his eternal Salvation; and for this Reason they decry all other Men's Perswasion in Religion but their own, which they say is supported by the *Infallibility* of their Church; and therefore is beyond even the Possibility of failing.

But would these Men have us build our Faith upon the *Infallibility* of their Church, without any Proof at all brought for it; or have they sufficient Arguments to convince and satisfy us of the Truth and Reality of such *Infallibility*? The former of these is altogether absurd; nor do they demand so foolish and unreasonable a Thing from us: If then they undertake first to bring sufficient Proof of their *Infallibility*, before they would have us receive or acknowledge it, I demand farther, is this same Proof, in itself, infallible or not? If not, then what are we the better for the pretended *Infallibility* of a Church, which has not infallible Arguments to support it? But if their Proof be *in itself* infallible, it will follow

that there is an Infallibility antecedent to that of the Church: And why may we not suppose, that the Truth of Religion may thereby be proved as well antecedently to the Infallibility of the Church, as the Infallibility of the Church antecedently to the Truth of Religion.

Again, whatever Arguments they offer for the Proof of their pretended Infallibility, must be, and accordingly are always drawn either from Reason, or Scripture, or both in conjunction together; from which same Fountains we also directly bring our Proofs for the establishing of the Truth of our Religion: Now, let their Arguments for their Infallibility, and ours for our Religion, be well compared the one with the other; and it will soon appear to every impartial Man, that those, which we bring immediately in the behalf of Religion, are by much the most conclusive of the two. Nor can they of the Church of *Rome* pretend to offer one single Word in behalf of their Infallibility; but upon a Supposition that the Being of God, and the Truth of Christianity are first sufficiently established upon the Proofs which are common both to us and them: So that whatever Strength they may fancy to be in their Arguments for the Infallibility of their Church, it must all of necessity depend upon those that are, antecedently thereto, brought for the establishing of Religion, and Christianity in general: From whence these two Consequences must unavoidably follow; *First*, That no Man's Belief of Religion and Christianity in the general can justly in the least depend upon the supposed Infallibility of the Church; and, *Secondly*, That if from Reason and Scripture, as good or better Arguments may be immediately had for the establishing of the particular Doctrines of Christianity, than are brought for the Proof of this pretended Infallibility:

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bility; we may as well, nay we had much better receive such particular Doctrines upon the Proof that so may be brought for them, than endeavour to lay the Strefs of them upon such an Infallibility, as cannot be so well proved as they themselves may be without it. And indeed when it is considered how much the Writers of the Church of *Rome* are puzzled, either where to place their pretended Infallibility, or how to make any sort of Proof of it, it may well amaze every sober Man to find them with so much Confidence insisting upon a Thing, which, on a sober Examination, appears to be no better than a Fiction or Hypothesis, contrived to serve a Turn, and void of all satisfactory Proof or Reality.

But it is not enough, that we can so abundantly retort this Objection upon the Church of *Rome*; for notwithstanding this, the Difficulty still remains and requires another kind of Solution: In order whereunto, it must indeed be freely granted, that in all matters of great Moment and Consequence (where we suppose every Man willing to run as little Hazard as possibly may be) if strict and *infallible Certainty* can be obtained, no Man ought to stop short of it, or to content himself with any degree of *bare Probability*, how great soever it may appear to be. But let us suppose, either that the Matter in debate will not admit, or that the Person who makes the Enquiry, is incapable of this sort of absolute Certainty: What must be done in such a Case as this? A Man, for Example, expects in all probability to be ruined, if he does not take a Journey of a hundred Miles: Now, because it cannot be mathematically demonstrated to him that he shall come safe to the Place whither he would travel; that he shall neither break his Bones by a Fall from his Horse, nor be drowned in crossing of a Ferry, nor mur-

thered by Highwaymen, nor perish upon the Road by any other Accident; because these things, I say, cannot be strictly demonstrated, must he therefore resolve to stay at Home, at all Hazards, and not make the best Preparation he can for his Journey? If any Man thinks he can produce better Proofs, for Religion, than those we already have; no doubt but every Man, as far as he is capable, ought fairly to weigh and consider them: But if we already have as much as may abundantly satisfy every sober and impartial Man, and the Arguments for Religion do vastly over-balance those few trifling Pretences that are brought against it; must we sullenly sit down (and that with the greatest Hazard of eternal Misery) in Atheism, Scepticism, or Infidelity; for no other Reason but that we have not that *strict, infallible Proof* of things, which neither does their Nature require, nor our own perhaps is capable of receiving?

§. XXVII. The other Difficulty which arises upon this Discourse, is, That however rational and satisfactory all this Account which we give of our Religion may, to Men of Sense and Understanding, appear to be; yet the vulgar Sort, which are much the greatest part of Mankind, are not only ignorant of it all, but even altogether incapable of apprehending the Force of the several Arguments contained in it; as will soon appear to any Man that makes the Experiment. Either then we must suppose numberless Millions of Men to be under no Obligation of embracing or professing any Religion at all, or the Foundation of such Obligation must be laid upon some other and plainer Account of things, that may not be above the Reach of their Capacity.

For Answer hereunto, I desire that these two things may be duly considered.

First,

Sect. XXVII. *by the Test of* REASON. 101

First, That many Men there are in the World who have a very sufficient Understanding of much more than what in Words they are well able to express: For Example; A Man altogether illiterate, oftentimes follows the Business of his particular Calling with Prudence and Discretion; which plainly shews that he has a just and right Notion of Things, so far at least as to guide and direct him in his private Affairs: But if upon many Occasions you desire him in Words to express the Grounds and Reasons of what he does, you will find him, being no Master at all of Language, but very imperfectly able to do it: Now let us suppose the same Man (which very often is the Case) to be very regular in the Performance of all the Duties of Religion; constant in the Worship of God, both public and private; frequent at the Holy Communion; just, true, sober, temperate, charitable, and obedient to lawful Authority; and all this, as far as ever we are able to judge, upon a true Principle of Conscience; is not such constant and uniform Regularity of his Life and Actions, as clear a Proof that he has also a due Apprehension of the Things of Religion, sufficient to direct and support him through God's Grace in the Practice of it: Altho' at the same time, if you ask him *a Reason of the Hope that is in him*, and of all that he does on that Account, his Answer as to the outward Form of Expression will appear but weak and imperfect: And must be supplied, as to that Defect, by the Discretion and Charity of him that makes the Enquiry. It is therefore a great Mistake if we conclude, that Men understand little or nothing of Religion, or the Reason of it, only because they know not how to cloth their Thoughts with Words or Expressions, that carry any tolerable Propriety in them: In many Cases a Man's Actions much more certainly than
his.

his Words, do shew what his Judgment is, and what are the inward Thoughts and Sentiments of his Mind.

Secondly, If we rightly distinguish between Religion strictly and properly so called (which comprehends no more but what is ordinarily required for the Salvation of every Man) and Notions or Doctrines, whether false or true which have been mixed with, and by many adopted into it; whatever Abstruseness or Difficulty may occur in many of the latter, there is nothing in the former, (I mean as far as it is necessary to be understood) or in the Grounds or Reasons of it, that is above the Capacity of every Man of common Understanding that sober and diligently makes Enquiry into it. The Nature of God, the Extent of his Attributes, and the utmost Depth of all those Mysteries which *in part* are only revealed unto us in the Gospel; (1 Cor. xiii. 9.) are altogether as incomprehensible and unfathomable to the Learned as to the Unlearned: But what Man almost is there of so mean a Capacity, that may not, with moderate Instruction and due Attention thereunto, be fully and rationally convinced of the Being and chief Attributes of God, from the very Structure of the World; of the Truth of Christianity from the well-attested Prophecies and Miracles, (besides its own internal Goodness) whereby it is confirmed; and lastly of all, those Doctrines and Rules of Life that are necessary to Salvation, from the main Tenor and Design of the Holy Scriptures, in which all sorts of Christians do agree, as, I have already tho' briefly set forth the whole matter: It is not every Man indeed who may be capable of disputing, or maintaining an Argument for Religion, as I have already said: But if Men generally do not understand as much of it as is necessary to Salvation,

nor

nor are able to give some tolerable Account (however imperfectly exprefs'd) why they hope to be saved in and by it, the Fault is not that they thing itself is above their Capacity; but either that they want good and plain Instruction, or else will not give sufficient Attention to it; and let thus much suffice to have been spoken to the second Difficulty.

§. XXVIII. And now for a Conclusion of all: I have only this to add; That whatever Knowledge or Understanding in Religion, or the Grounds and Reasons of it any Man may have, if he does not carefully and conscientiously bring forth the Fruit of it in a truly virtuous and pious Life; it will be so far from being of any Advantage to him, that, on the contrary, it will most certainly turn to his greater Condemnation; *the Servant who knows not his Lord's Will, and, by Reason of his Ignorance, commits things in themselves worthy of Stripes*, has something to plead in excuse for himself (at least if his Ignorance be not through his own Fault or Neglect) and *shall be beaten but with few Stripes*; but *that Servant who knows his Lord's Will, and yet prepares not himself, neither does according to his Will*; such a Servant as this, not only in the highest Degree affronts his Lord, but also gives great Scandal and evil Example to his Fellow-Servants; and therefore is most justly sentenced to *be beaten with many Stripes*; *for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required*, Luke xii. 47, 48.

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THIS Discourse is published at the Desire of a worthy Friend, who, having heard the Substance of it, in the Cathedral of Kilsenora, from the Pulpit, was pleased to think, that if it were printed, it might afford some useful Instruction, particularly to that remote Part of the Country, where Books of any Sort are not very plenty.

That it might the better answer this good Design, I have expressed my Thoughts more fully (and thereby, I hope, more plainly) than what the Time would allow me to do when I was Preaching: And because the Church of Rome lays so great a Stress upon what they call Tradition, I have thought it not improper to insist a little more largely on that Point, than otherwise on such an Occasion I should have done.

I hope the Controversial Part of the Discourse may be of some Use to those who will vouchsafe it a serious and impartial Reading; and as for that Part of it which is Practical, I may with Assurance say, that it will be of Benefit to every Man, of whatever Persuasion or Profession he may be, provided that he follows his Life according to it.

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St. Paul's Religion.



IN the Beginning of the twenty fourth Chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles* we have an Account of the *Accusation* which the High Priest and Elders of the *Jewish People*, by their Orator *Tertullus*, brought against the blessed Apostle *St. Paul*, before *Pallas* the *Roman Governor*; the Sum and Substance of which, as we find it set forth in the fifth Verse, is brought under these two Heads:

First, That he was guilty of Treasonable Practices against the Civil State; *We have found this Man* (says *Tertullus*) *a pestilent Fellow, and a Mover of Sedition among all the Jews throughout the World.*

And, *Secondly*, That he was also a Disturber of the *Jewish Church*, and a Promoter of *Heresy* in Religion: *A Ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarenes*: For by that Name they called the *Christians*, because they were Followers of *Jesus of Nazareth*.

As to the former Part of this Accusation, *St. Paul* directly denies it, as an Untruth, for which there was not the least Colour; and dares them, if they can, to prove what they thus alledged against him: *They neither found me in the Temple* (says he) *disputing with any Man, neither stirring up the People, neither in the Synagogues, nor in the City: Neither can they prove the Things whereof they now accuse me.* Ver. 12, 13.

But as to the other Branch of the Charge, he thinks it most proper to explain himself upon it, and to give an Account of that *Religion* which he professed and practised; of which he was not at all ashamed, notwithstanding that they endeavoured to fasten the odious Name of a *Set*, or *Heresy*, (for that is the Name in the original Greek) upon it. *But this I confess unto thee (says he) that after the Way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers; believing all Things which are written in the Law and the Prophets. And having Hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead, both of the Just and Unjust. And herein do I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Men.*

This is the Account which St. Paul here plainly (tho' briefly) gives of his *Religion*; and since the Accusation which the Church of Rome brings against our *Religion*, is much like that, which the *Jews* brought against St. Paul's; and our Answer to them is the very same, which the Apostle here gives to the other: It will not be improper, as we proceed, plainly to shew, that the same Defence which he here makes for *himself*, we also have a Right to make for *ourselves*, in return to that unjust Charge, which our Adversaries bring against us, as the *Jews* did against him; and, consequently, that our *Religion* is the same with his.

It were ever to be wished, that in the Management of all Controversies about Religion; each Party would carefully avoid all harsh and bitter Expressions, and all unmannerly Reflections one upon another. As these Things are the Effect of Passion in those who make use of them, so do they only serve to raise the like in the adverse Party: The Consequence of which is, that Men's Understanding, on both

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both Sides, grow more and more disturbed, and thereby less fit for the due Apprehension and Reception of the Truth: Whereas, if every Disputant would always content himself with clearly stating his Case, and calmly representing the Arguments upon which he grounds his Opinion, this would soon set Truth in it's clearest Light; which, with God's Blessing, is the only way to bring Men to a conscientious Profession of it. Or ^{if}, after all, they could not hereby be brought to agree in the Profession of the same Faith and Doctrine; yet Peace and Charity might still in a great Measure be preserved, which alone would be an unvaluable Blessing to the World. Of this Meekness and Calmness, in managing a Religious Disputation, St. Paul here sets us a most excellent Example: His Adversaries call him a *pestilent Fellow*, and *Ringleader of a Sect*; and represented his Religion as no better than a *Heresy*, or causeless Departure from the *Jewish Church*: To all which the *Apostle*, in the most mild and gentle Manner, makes Answer in the Words which you have just now heard; *After the Way which they call Heresy, &c.* Where we may observe,

First, That St. Paul thinks it no just Objection against his Religion, that they endeavour to brand it with an odious Name. If he had taught any wicked or false Doctrine, any thing that were contrary either to the Holy Scriptures (that were then extant,) or to sober and sound Reason, or to the Rules of an honest and virtuous Life; his Adversaries ought to have instanced at least in some one such Doctrine so taught by him, and to have shewn the Falseness or Perniciousness of it. But instead of this, they make use only of general Terms; they call his Religion *Heresy*, and those that profess it a *Sect*; to which it was enough for him to answer, *After*

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ter the Way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers: And if he had said no more than this, it ought to have been taken as a sufficient Answer, until they should form a more particular Accusation against him.

Much such another Accusation as this of the *Jews* against St. Paul, they of the Church of Rome bring against all us, who are call'd *Protestants*. Some of their greatest Divines finding it too difficult a Task to carry on the Dispute about particular Matters with us, have thought it enough to insist upon this one general Charge against us, that we are *Hereticks*, or, in other Terms, that we refuse to receive and own their Church as the Guide of our Faith: To which our Reply is the very same with this of St. Paul, and upon the very same Grounds also.

As to the *Rule* of our Faith, *the Holy Scriptures*, I shall have Occasion to speak of *them* by and by; but at present, for the particular *Parts* of our Religion: We profess to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, as they are comprised in that ancient Creed, which for Substance was only and universally received throughout the primitive Church, and to this Day retains the Name of the *Apostles Creed*: Nor does the Church of Rome require the Profession of any other *Creed*, from all those whom she admits to Baptism*, and thereby, according to their own Doctrine, into a State of *Regeneration* and Salvation: We acknowledge our selves bound to live in the constant Practice of all those Duties to God, our Neighbour, and our selves, which are partly prescribed to us by the Rules of sober Reason, but more

* See the Roman Ritual in the Office of Baptism. *Baptismus est Sacramentum Regenerationis. — Per Baptismum in Christo filii misericordia renascimur.* Catech. Conc. Trid.

St. Paul's Religion.

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fully by the Word of God: We require that every Person who is duly qualified to be a Member of Christ's Church, should be received thereinto by Baptism, *in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*: And amongst other Acts of religious Worship which we own ourselves obliged to pay unto God, one is, that we frequently commemorate the Death and Passion of his blessed Son, by eating of that Bread, and drinking of that Cup, which he has appointed for this Purpose: And lastly, as often as, upon a strict Examination of ourselves, we find that we have neglected or transgressed any Part of our Duty, the only Way of obtaining Pardon from God, and reconciling ourselves to him, we take to be by a hearty and sincere Repentance, which we teach to consist in an humble Acknowledgment of our Sins to God, and a hearty Amendment and Reformation of our Lives. This is the Sum and Substance of the Religion of a *Protestant*: And if a Man thus believes and lives, and with Sincerity continues so to do, to the End of his Days, however ignorant or mistaken he may unavoidably happen to be in other Matters, yet we judge that he will be saved, and made eternally happy, not for any Merits of his own, but for the Merits, and through the Mediation of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, *who was delivered for our Offences, and was raised again for our Justification.* Rom. iv. 25.

If then, in all this, our Adversaries can tax us with teaching *any one Thing* that is *false*; or if they pretend that the Belief or Practice of any thing *more* than what we teach, is *necessary to Salvation*; let them name that *particular Thing*; and as we hitherto always have been, so we still shall be most willing and ready to enter into a sober Debate with them about it. But as for that *general Charge of Heresy*, with which some of them make so great a Noise against

against us; although we have again and again most fully vindicated ourselves from this Imputation; yet would it have been enough to say that, as long as we know that every Part and Branch of our Religion is true and agreeable to the Will of God, we ought not in the least to be put out of Conceit with it, on account of this or any other odious Name, which our Enemies causelessly bestow upon it. *After the Way which they call HERESY, so worship I the God of my Fathers, &c.* says St. Paul; and so for the same Reason, may we say also.

But before I dismiss this Point, I must put our Adversaries of the Church of Rome in mind of one very material Thing, which is, that altho' they were able to prove the Truth of those Doctrines which they receive and we reject; such as *Transubstantiation, Purgatory, the Sacrifice of the Mass, &c.* (which we have often abundantly shewn they never can do) yet would not this be a sufficient Ground to charge us with *Heresy*, except they also shew that God requires the Belief of these Things from every Man, *as of Necessity in order to his Salvation.* For however true a Doctrine may be, yet if the Belief of it be not necessary to Salvation, it is possible that a Man may be ignorant of it, or not believe it, and yet be a sound Member of Christ's Church, and consequently no *Heretick*. Instead, therefore, of bestowing all their Labour in proving the Truth of their Doctrines, (wherein they have shewn very much Art, though to very little purpose) we desire they would take some Pains, if they can, to prove the Necessity of them also (whereof hitherto they have been very sparing) or else they but beat the Air, and fight with a Shadow: For again I repeat it, let a Doctrine be never so true, yet if the Belief of it be not necessary to Salvation, no Man ought to be accounted an *Heretick* barely for not believing it. Either therefore, they

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they must prove that the Belief of these their Doctrines was *always* necessary to Salvation, even from the first Preaching of the Gospel, or that the Church of Rome has Power from God to make the Belief of them necessary to Salvation, though in the Days of the Apostles it were not so; or else they must own that we are no *Hereticks* for not believing them, or that though we are *Hereticks*, yet still we may be in the Way of Salvation; and consequently that *Heresy* is no damnable Sin.

Secondly, For a farther Vindication of himself against the Charge of *Heresy*, St. Paul here declares who alone it is that is the Object of his *Religious Worship*. *After the Way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers*, says he.

That divers Persons had, before that Time, suffered Martyrdom for the Christian Faith, and were glorified Saints in Heaven, particularly *Stephen* (Acts vii. 59.) and *James the Brother of John*, (Acts xii. 7.) was well known to St. Paul: And if we give Credit to *Eusebius* *, whose Opinion is followed by very eminent Writers of the Church of Rome, the blessed Virgin *Mary* had some Years before departed out of this World, and (as some supposed, and that † Church to this Day holds) was receiv'd, Body and Soul, up into Glory. If then St. Paul had believ'd (as the Church of Rome now teaches) that the Saints in Heaven are to be invoked and prayed to, and their Images, as also that of *Christ*, were to be worshipped; it is very strange that the *Apostle*, upon such an eminent Occasion as this, should not give the least Intimation of any such Matter. He was *not ashamed*

* Maria Virgo, Jesu Christi Mater, ad Filium in Cælum assumitur, ut quidam fuisse Sibi revelatum scribunt. Euseb., Chron. Hier. Interp. A. D. 43,

† Assumpta est Maria in Cælum, gaudet Exercitus Angelorum. Miss. Rom. In Assumpt. B. Mar. Virg.

of the Gospel of Christ, Rom. i. 16.) and the many Perils and Sufferings which he had already undergone for it, sufficiently shew, that he was not afraid openly to profess it, and every Part of it, (2 Cor. xi. 23. &c.) And yet when he here gives an Account of the *Christian Worship*, which he practised, he makes not the least mention either of Saints or Images; no, nor of the Virgin *Mary* herself; but only of God alone, as the Object of it. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him ONLY shalt thou serve*, says Christ, (Mat. iv. 10.) and according to this Precept, St. Paul here plainly gives an Account of his own Practice.

When therefore the Church of *Rome* condemns us, amongst other Things, for this, That we confine all Religious Worship to God alone, and refuse to give any Part thereof either to *Saints* or *Images*; I see not how they can avoid involving this blessed *Apostle*, and indeed all the rest of the *Apostles*, in the same Condemnation; so that we must of Necessity herein either stand or fall together. Search the Holy Scriptures, both of the *Old* and *New-Testament*, from the one End to the other, and in almost every Leaf, you will find either Precepts, Exhortations, or Examples of worshipping GOD: But as for the Invocation of *Saints*, or any Sort of Worship to be given to *Images*, there is not one single Passage in the whole *Bible* that gives the least Countenance thereto, but very many to the contrary: And as for St. Paul's both Doctrine and Practice, they are as clear as the Sun, not only from the Passage of Scripture now more immediately under our Consideration, but also from many more that every where occur in all his Writings: God alone appears to be the Object of his religious Worship; and if herein he were in the right, we who agree with him in this, as

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well as in all other Parts of his Religion, cannot possibly be in the Wrong.

Thirdly, St. Paul, that he may yet more effectually and unanswerably make his Defence, proceeds to a free and open Acknowledgement of the Ground and Foundation of his Faith, by professing to believe *all Things which are written in the Law and the Prophets*; under which Expression the Jews, in their common Speech, were wont to comprehend all those Books of Holy Scripture which they receiv'd, and which we now call by the Name of the *Old Testament*. (Mat. ii. 13. and xxii. 40.)

For the better apprehending of what the *Apostle* here means and aims at, we must take Notice, that the *Jewish People* (besides the written Word of God) had receiv'd divers Customs and Doctrines, which they called *Traditions*, about which they were guilty of two great Errors.

First, That whereas some of these *Traditions* might in themselves be innocent, though no way necessary; they laid as great, or sometimes a greater Stress upon them, than upon the known Law of God himself. Thus, for Example, they were very careful to *wash their Hands when they eat*, because this was a *Tradition of the Elders*, (Mat. xv. 2.) nor would there have been any Hurt in this Custom, if it had been used without Superstition: But while they were thus careful, in all Appearance, to *make clean the Outside*, their *inward Part was full of Ravening and Wickedness*. (Luke xi. 39.) Much like unto some Persons who will not, upon any Account, taste a Bit of Flesh upon one of their Fast-Days, as being contrary to the Tradition or Institution of their Church; and yet upon the same or any other Day, will make no great Scruple of Drunkenness, Cursing,

sing, Swearing, or Cheating, tho' they know them to be contrary to God's own Law.

The other great Error which the *Jews* ran into about their *Traditions* was, that, in some Cases, they thought the Observation of a *Tradition* to be a sufficient *Excuse*, and even a *Justification* of them in *transgressing* a *Commandment of God*: Of which our blessed Saviour gives a most remarkable Instance (Mat. xv. 4.) *God* (says he) *commanded, saying, Honour thy Father and thy Mother*——But ye say, *whosoever shall say to his Father or his Mother, it is a Gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his Father or his Mother, he shall be free.* After which Pattern the Council of Constance, (Sess. 13.) seems to have copied; in freely owning that *Christ* instituted the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and administered it to his Disciples in both Kinds, and that in the Primitive Church this Sacrament was in both Kinds administered to the Faithful: And yet, with non obstante, decreeing that this Sacrament shall be taken by the Laity, only under one Kind, viz, that of Bread. Nor have Men of great * Name been wanting in the Church of Rome who have carried this Matter so far as to maintain, that the Pope has Power to dispense in all Things of the Law of God, excepting the Articles of Faith: But I must return to the Jewish Traditions.

Before St. Paul was converted to the Christian Faith, he was as fond of these Traditions as any of his Brethren: *I profited* (says he) *in the Jewish Religion, above many of mine Equals in mine own Nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the TRADITIONS of my Fathers* (Gal. i. 14.) Here he seems to lay the great Stress of the Jewish Religion, as it was then professed, upon these their Traditions, according to which they interpreted, and often wrested the Holy Scriptures.

* Suar, De Leg. l. 10. c. 6. p. 3.

tures. But now that God had fully opened the Eyes of his Understanding, he takes not the least Notice of these same *Traditions*; but lays the Foundation of his Faith and Religion altogether upon the *Holy Scriptures*, notwithstanding that the *Jews* accounted him an *Heretick* for so doing. *After the Way which they call HERESY* (says he) *so worship I the God of my Fathers*, (not according to those groundless *Traditions* which the *Jewish* Doctors have by degrees imposed upon the ignorant People, but) *believing all Things which are written in the Law and the Prophets*. And to the very same Purpose he not long after expresses himself before King *Agrippa*: *I continue unto this Day* (says he) *witnessing both to Small and Great, saying none other Things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come*, (Acts xxvi. 22.) And again (v. 27.) *King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest*. Not one Word, in all this, or any other Part of St. Paul's Discourses or Writings, of the *Jewish Traditions*, except sometimes to reject them; but the Foundation of his Religion, as a Christian, is entirely laid in the *Holy Scriptures*.

Notwithstanding the many Errors and Corruptions which had taken Root in the *Jewish Church*, and at that Time almost universally overspread the Face of it, yet still it pleased God, by his over-ruling Providence, to preserve his *written Word*, and keep it pure and uncorrupted: Abundance of the Copies thereof had, for divers Ages, been very common in the Hands of the People, and very much read by them, besides the constant, publick *Reading thereof in their Synagogues every Sabbath-Day* (Acts xv. 21.) by which Means the *Fountain*, I mean the *Text* of the *Holy Scriptures*, was kept pure and undefiled, altho' the *Streams* which the Scribes and Pharisees drew from it, by their false *Glosses* and Interpretations, were

become corrupt, and very much polluted. To this pure Fountain therefore, that is to say, to the *Text of God's Holy Word*, St. Paul appeals, and is ready to stand or fall by whatever may from thence be fairly concluded: Wherein he does no more than what, long before, the Prophet *Isaiab* had directed them all to do: *To the Law and to the Testimony* (says that Prophet) *if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them.* *Isai. viii. 20.*

The Divine Authority of all those Writings which, among the *Jews*, were usually comprehended under the common Appellation of *the Law and the Prophets*, was universally acknowledged by that People; or if any one (whether *Jew* or *Gentile*) should offer to deny it, there were, and are such strong Arguments and Proofs for it, as may be abundantly sufficient to convince every sober and impartial Man. From these sacred Writings St. Paul was able most clearly to shew, that God had often promised to send an extraordinary Person into the World, under the Title of the *Messiah* or *Christ*, more fully to make known his Will to Mankind than what before had been done, and thereby to promote that universal Happiness, not only of the People of *Israel*, but of all the Nations of the Earth who should sincerely cleave unto him: And from all the Circumstances of the Person, Family, Birth, Life, Doctrine, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of this same *Christ* or *Messiah*, as the same might clearly be gathered either from the express Words of these Divine Writings, or by just Consequence from them, he was able beyond Contradiction to make out, that *Jesus of Nazareth*, who not long before had been most unjustly put to Death, was that very *Christ* or *Messiah* whom God had promised, and consequently that all the Doctrine, which either he, or any by his Authority had taught, was to be owned and received as the

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the Doctrine of God. All this (I say) St. Paul was able most fully and convincingly to prove from the *Writings of Moses and the Prophets*, taken by themselves alone, and interpreted partly by comparing one Passage with another: But if once he should have admitted of the *Jewish Traditions*, either by themselves alone, or as the best Interpreters of the *Holy Scriptures*, all his Proof must immediately thereby have been overthrown; it being one of the most receiv'd *Traditions*, at that Time among the *Jews*, that the *Christ* or *Messiah*, whom they expected, was to be a great and glorious Prince upon Earth, to fight their Battles, and deliver them from the Subjection wherein they had so long been to their Enemies: Which popular Conceit had taken such deep Root in the Minds even of our blessed Saviour's Disciples, as in his Life-time to put them upon contending who of them should be the *greatest in his Kingdom* (Mat. xx. 20. Mark ix. 34.) and after his Resurrection, renewed in them an Expectation that he would then *restore again the Kingdom to Israel* (Acts i. 6.) All these unwritten *Traditions*, therefore, St. Paul declines, as having no Authority from God; and appeals to the *written Word of God*, to the more *sure Word of Prophecy* (as St. Peter calls it, 2 Pet. i. 19.) the Ground and Foundation of his Faith, as a *Christian*, being this, that he *believes all Things which are written in the Law and the Prophets*.

And now to apply all this to my present Purpose: When our blessed Saviour, after his Resurrection, had commanded his Disciples to *go and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, (Mat. xxviii. 19.) the first thing which they did in pursuance of this Command, was to preach the Gospel in *Jerusalem*, where the first Foundation of the Christian Church was laid: And as more and more

People were converted to the Christian Faith, so more *Labourers* still came into *the Harvest*, (Mat. ix. 38.) who gave such Assistance in carrying on the Work, that in a few Years, through God's Blessing upon their Endeavours, the Church had extended herself far and wide throughout the then known World, notwithstanding the great Opposition and bitter Persecution which every where she met with, in her Progress.

All Persons who, according to our Saviour's Direction, were by Baptism admitted into the Church, if they were of Age, were required to make Profession of the Christian Faith; and if they were Infants, were in like Manner receiv'd, in case their Parents, or those who had the Care of them, were Believers: As under the Old Law, Infants in the like Circumstances were circumcised, and thereby admitted into *Covenant* with God: (Gen. xvii. 12, 13.)

If we have recourse to all the Forms of Christian Profession, which, in any Part of the Church, were anciently used, or required to be made, in order to Baptism; we shall find no other Matter or Article of meer Belief contained in them, or any of them, than what we now find in the *Creed* which is commonly called the *Apostles Creed*: Nor does even the Church of *Rome*, to this Day, require any other Confession or Profession of Faith to be made by any Person at the Time of his Baptism, as appears from their own *Ritual*, and the Office of Baptism therein contained, as I have already observed: Nor was it, in the Primitive Church, denied, or so much as doubted of, but that if a Person duely baptized, continued to the End of his Days in the sincere Profession of this same Faith, and in the constant Practice of a virtuous and pious Life, he should most certainly be saved.

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For the better confirming of all Believers, in the Christian Faith, and farther instructing them in the Doctrine thereunto belonging, divers Holy Men, being moved by the Spirit of God, soon after Christianity had begun to be preached, writ the several Books and Epistles, which are now all joined together in one Book, and commonly called by the Name of the *New Testament*.

The same Book of the *New Testament* was very early and universally received and owned throughout the Christian Church, as being in all Points agreeable to that Faith and Doctrine which was taught and preached by Christ and his Apostles; and for this Reason, it was every where among them, valued as a most inestimable Treasure; and both Copies and Translations thereof into almost all Languages, as also of the *Old Testament*, whose Authority it confirmed, were soon multiplied, and gotten into the Hands of almost all Christians, who were able to procure and read them; and the like Copies and Translations have all along to this Day been every where throughout the Christian World, handed down to Posterity; by which Means, thro' God's good Providence, it became impossible for any notable Error or Corruption to creep into any Number of such Translations or Copies, without being immediately discovered and exploded. So that at this Day, abating here and there some various Readings, which make very little Alteration any where in the Sense, (and in Matters of Consequence none at all,) we have the Holy Scriptures both of the *Old* and *New Testament* in the same Purity and Perfection as they had in the Primitive Church.

Over and above those Things which anciently were look'd upon as necessary to be believed in order to Salvation, the Church of *Rome* has, of late Years, by Degrees introduced certain new Doctrines, which

which she also requires all Men to receive and believe, and pronounces Damnation against all who refuse so to do *. The Chief of which are by Name set down in the new Creed of Pope Pius the IV. viz. That there are Seven Sacraments; the Propitiatory Sacrifice of the Mass, Transubstantiation, Communion under one Kind, Purgatory, with Prayers and Masses for the Dead, Worshipping and Invoking the Saints in Heaven, Worshipping their Reliques, Worshipping the Images of Christ, the blessed Virgin, and other Saints, Indulgences; that the Church of Rome is the Mother and Mistress of all Churches; and the Pope of Rome, as Vicar of Christ, and Successor to St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, is to be obey'd. Nor is all this enough, but they farther require, that all other Things that have been delivered, defined and declared by the sacred Canons and general Councils, particularly that of Trent, should be received and professed without (so much as) doubting †, and all Things contrary thereto rejected and accursed: And, that after all, it be owned, that out of this true Catholick Faith no Man can be saved; as I have just now noted.

It is hard to suppose that any Man, who allows himself the least Use of his Understanding, and is at all acquainted with the Holy Scripture and Antiquity, should not be much shock'd to find so many Additions here made to the ancient Christian Faith, so many more Things required in order to Salvation, than what are demanded to be professed or promised at the Time of Baptism; and all the Determinations of the Canons and General Councils, particularly that of Trent, not only to be receiv'd, but professed also, and this without entertaining any Doubt of them,

* Hanc veram Catholicam fidem, extra quam nemo salvus esse potest. Bull. Pii 4.

† Indubitanter recipio atque; profiteor. Ibid.

them, although, at the same Time, no Recital is made of the Particulars, nor any Distinction between those Cannons and Councils, which, at this Time, are receiv'd and owned, and those that are not so, even within the Church of Rome herself: To give the best Colour, therefore, that they can to this whole Matter, in the first Place they offer at some Proof from *Holy Scriptures*, for divers of these their Doctrines and Tenets: But this appears to be so weak and ill grounded, that no Man, who is not beforehand strongly prepossessed in favour of their Conclusions, would ever think of drawing them from such Premises as they insist on in the *Scripture*. Are not figurative Expressions as frequent in those Holy Writings, as they are in our most familiar and best understood Conversation? And is any thing more common amongst all Mankind, than, in their ordinary Discourse, to speak of the *Sign* by the Name of the *Thing signified*? When therefore we find our blessed Saviour himself using such Expressions as these, *I am the Door of the Sheep*, (Joh. x. 7.) *I am the good Shepherd*, (v. 11.) and *I am the Vine, ye are the Branches*, (Joh. xv. v.) which Expressions, with hundreds more that occur throughout the *Old* and *New Testament*, all Men allow, are not to be understood in a strict literal Sense: Would any unprejudiced Man conclude, in direct Opposition to common Reason, as well as his Senses, that when our Saviour, speaking of the Sacrament of his Body and Blood, said, *This is my Body*, (Mat. xxvi. 26.) and *This is my Blood of the New Testament*, (v. 28.) his Meaning was, that at all Times, whenever this Holy Sacrament should be duly consecrated, as soon as the same Words should be pronounced, the Substance of Bread and Wine should no more remain, but only the bare *Species* or *Appearance* of them, that the whole Substance of the Bread and Wine should

should immediately be converted or *transubstantiated* into the Substance of his own Body and Blood, that under *each* of these *Appearances*, (viz. of Bread and Wine) whole Christ, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, is really and substantially contained; and that therefore this most Holy Sacrament is to have the same Worship given to it, as is to be given to the true God: Would any *unprejudiced* Man (I say) ever think of drawing such Meanings or Consequences as these from the above-mentioned Words of our Saviour? Besides many more most absurd Doctrines and Practices, of the Church of *Rome*, which, in further Consequence of the former, they under Pain of Damnation would impose upon us; all which have no better Foundation in Scripture, than these two Expressions, *This is my Body*, and *This is my Blood*; which Words, if we interpret according to the common figurative Way of Speaking, which *Christ* himself at other Times used, and ever has been frequent, and perfectly well understood amongst all Men, (as far as we know any thing of their several Languages,) the whole *Roman* Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, together with all that they have built upon it, and what little more they would vainly draw from the *Scripture* for it, must all at once fall to the Ground. And the like may be said of all the other *Scripture Proofs* which they pretend to bring for the rest of those Points that are controverted between us. For altho' nothing perhaps that they maintain, carries so many monstrous Absurdities in it, as their Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; yet all the Arguments which they bring from *Scripture* in behalf of the rest of these Tenets of theirs, which we reject, are equally weak and inconclusive; as it were most easy for me to shew, if it were proper upon this Occasion, to enter into so large a Digression.

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To supply this manifest Want of *Scripture-Proof*, the *Romanists* have Recourse to the *Authority of their Church*, and would have us believe, that whatever Doctrine has been decreed by a *General Council*, and confirmed by the *Pope*, is to be received as an *Article of Faith*, and this under Pain of no less than eternal Damnation: But besides many other Questions which we have to ask them concerning the Divine Authority and right Qualifications, both of *Pope* and *Council*, to which they have no satisfactory Return to make us; we desire an Answer to this one, *viz.* Suppose the *Pope*, in conjunction with a *General Council*, should determine a Doctrine that never before had been received or owned by the Christian Church; would such Doctrine immediately become an Article of Faith? To evade rather than answer which Question, they frequently suggest, that the Determinations of their Church, in necessary Matters, are grounded either upon the *Holy Scripture*, or *Tradition*, or both together: And by * *Tradition*, they mean all such Things as were made known to the Apostles by Christ himself, or by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and by them so delivered down, as to come to us, tho' not reduced into Writing. This *Tradition* they call the *Unwritten Word of God*, and suppose it therefore to be of Divine Authority: And therefore if any of their *Doctrinal* Determinations cannot fully be proved from *Scripture*, yet they think it is enough to render them *Articles of Faith*, that in their Opinion they are exactly conformable to *Apostolick Tradition*: And as for such *Cannons* and *Decrees* as relate to *Discipline* alone, it suffices that they are agreeable to the

* *Sine scripto Traditionibus, quæ ex ipsius Christi ore ab Apostolis acceptæ, aut ab ipsis Apostolis, spiritu Sancto dictante, quasi per manus Traditæ, ad nos usq; pervenerunt. Conc. Trid. Sess. 4. Decret. de Can. Scrip.*

the Rules of Prudence and Charity,, and that nothing be enacted which is any way contrary to the Law of God; the Rules of *Ecclesiastical Discipline* being, on all hands, allow'd to be in themselves alterable, according to the different State and Circumstances of the Church.

For the clearing up of this whole Matter at once, the best Way will be to distinguish between *Divine Apostolick Traditions* (whether real or pretended,) and *meer Ecclesiastical Institutions*.

If a Christian Church (whether universal or particular) has, by its own Authority, settled and established any Rules of Discipline, or Ceremonies, to be observed in the outward Performance of God's Worship; such Things as these, so settled, are to be looked upon only as *meer Ecclesiastical Institutions*; and though they may at any Time, for good Reasons, be altered by the same Authority that established them, yet as long as the Establishment continues, it is the Duty of every Christian rather to submit to them than disturb the Peace of the Church; provided they contain nothing that is contrary to the Law of God; or the great Design of Christianity, which is true Piety and Holiness.

But if any Doctrine to be believed in order to Salvation, or any Rule either of Worship or Discipline, is offered to be imposed upon us, not because it may be proved from Holy Scripture, but under a Pretence that the Apostles received the same either from Christ himself, or by Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and handed it down to us, without ever committing it to Writing, which is the *Romish* Notion of an *Apostolick Tradition*; our Answer is to the same Purpose with that of St. Paul; *After the Way which they call Heresy, so worship we the true God, believing and embracing all that can be proved from the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and*

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New Testament. But as for their pretended *Traditions*, we think we have as good reason to reject them, as the Apostles had for rejecting those of the *Jews*; viz. First, because none of them can be proved to be of *Divine Authority*: And secondly, because most (if not all) of them are directly contrary to the Law of God, and to the very Design of that Religion which he has revealed, and made known unto us by Christ and his Apostles.

But do not the *Romish* Divines offer Proof from the *Holy Scripture*, for these their controverted Tenets? I answer, for some of them they pretend so to do; but as for others, altho' they would gladly give some Colour to them from *Scripture*, yet they do not pretend that from thence they are able to prove them. There is not any one of these their Tenets for which they think they have more evident Proof from *Scripture*, than their great Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, upon which so many other of their Doctrines and Parts of Worship entirely depend; and yet it is notorious, that many of their greatest Doctors do freely acknowledge that this Doctrine cannot be concluded from the Force of any *Scripture-Argument*, (as you find them quoted by Archbishop Tillotson in his unanswerable *Discourse against Transubstantiation*) for which Reason they are forced both for this and all other their Novelties, to fly to what they call *Apostolick Tradition*; altho' at the same Time, they are able to give us no Evidence, either that, in the Apostles Days, any thing was accounted to be a Part of Religion, or necessary to Salvation, besides what we now find to be represented in *Holy Scripture*; or that there is any Footstep of these their pretended *Traditions* in the Writers of those Ages that were next to the Apostles, except in some Cases, a few remote and accidental Expressions, which

they now endeavour to wrest and distort from their true and original Meaning.

But may not God, if he so pleases, reveal many Things to Man, and find Ways to transmit them down to Posterity, without ever appointing them to be put into Writing? Was there any such Thing as a *written Law or Word of God*, during all the Ages of the World, before the Days of *Moses*? Was not the *Gospel* itself for some Years preached and spread abroad, before the *New-Testament* or any Part of it was written? And what Rule had the People of God, during these two Intervals, to walk by, but that of *Tradition*? I answer,

First, That the Question is not *what God MAY do, if he so pleases*; nor do we offer to make any Objections against his *Power or Authority*. If he at any Time is pleased to make his Will known without having it committed to Writing, no doubt but every Man who comes to the Knowledge of it, whether it be by *Reason or Tradition*, or by any other *sure Way*, is bound to give Obedience to it: But before we receive any thing as *the Will of God*, we must have good and warrantable Ground for our so doing; nor must we, in such a Case as this, depend upon any Evidence that is not both strong and clear, except we are willing to be deceived by those who are ignorant and credulous, or cheated by others who are crafty and designing.

Nor, secondly, are we now enquiring what is to be done by those who *have not or had not the written Word of God* to guide them. He who has not the bright Sun-shine to direct his Steps, must walk as well as he can by any other Light that he has, how small or obscure soever it may be. Before the *Word of God* was committed to Writing by *Moses*,

and

and after that, as long as it was confined to the People of *Israel* alone, they who wanted the Benefit of it, were certainly obliged to make the best use they could of their *Reason*, and whatever *Tradition* they could with Certainty depend upon, to find out the *Will of God*: And for those few Years that the *Gospel* was preached, before the Books of the *New Testament* were published, there was no other Way for Men to come to the Knowledge of it, but partly by the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, and more fully by the Preaching of the Apostles, and other Apostolick Persons, who, (besides the great Purity and Holiness of their Doctrine) confirmed what they taught, both by Testimonies taken from *the Law* and *the Prophets*, and by the Evidence of Miracles, which were frequently wrought by them: But our Case is altogether different from theirs; for we have the Holy Scriptures both of the *Old and New Testament*, by God's good Providence, put into our Hands, and therefore have no need to run after *Traditions*, except much clearer and better Proof could be brought for them, than what, at any Time, has been, or is offer'd by the Church of *Rome*.

Thirdly, therefore, as the *Council of Trent*, in the Place but now quoted, gives us the *Church of Rome's* Notion of *unwritten Tradition*; We desire them to give an Instance, if they can, of any one Thing which the *Apostles* received either from *Christ's* own Mouth, or by Dictate from the *Holy Ghost*, and delivered down all along to us without committing it to Writing: Let them (I say) give an authentick Instance of any one such thing as this, and then prove the same to be necessary to *Salvation*, (which is the true State of the Question between us about *Tradition*) and well may they call us *Hereticks* if we refuse to receive it. But until they can do this (which it is

Plain they never can) we resolve to stick close to the *Holy Scriptures*, and to leave their dark *unwritten* (and altogether unproved) *Tradition*, to those who desire to be fond of them.

But what then is the Meaning of these Expressions, which we meet with in the *New Testament*, *Stand fast, and hold the TRADITIONS which ye have been taught, whether by WORD or our Epistle*, (2 Thes. ii. 15.) And *hold fast the Form of sound Words which thou hast heard of me.*—*That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep*, 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. Do not these, and some other Passages not unlike them, most plainly refer to *unwritten Traditions*? I know some of the *Romish* Divines lay no small Stress upon these two Texts in particular: But the Answer to them, and to all others that seem to be any way like them, will be most easy, if we consider that *Tradition* signifies neither more nor less, but only the *Delivery* of a Thing from one to another. Now St. Paul had delivered the Doctrine of the Gospel to many People, whom he had converted to the Faith, and instructed in it, partly by his Preaching, and partly by the *Epistles* which he wrote to them: He had delivered the same Doctrine to Timothy, in sound Words, and committed the farther Propagation and Dispensation of it unto his Care: *The Things which thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also*, says he, (2 Tim. ii. 2.) And whatsoever was thus delivered or committed to them by the Authority of an Apostle, they were undoubtedly obliged to *hold fast* and *keep*, and to the best of their Power, to deliver down to following Ages. All this is denied by no Christian that I know of. Let then the Church of Rome give us as good Evidence that all their pretended *unwritten Traditions* were delivered down to us by the *Apostles* themselves,

themselves, as *Timothy* and the *Thessalonians* had, that the Doctrine which they received was *delivered* to them by *St. Paul*; and we will receive their *Traditions* in the same Manner as it shall appear that the Apostles *delivered* them. But to make a Noise about *Apostolical unwritten Traditions*, without giving any certain or even probable Evidence that they or any one of them came from the *Apostles*, is only fit to amuse weak People, who had rather take their Religion upon Trust, than be at a little Pains to enquire into the Ground and Foundation of it.

From the Multitude of Copies and Translations of the *Old and New Testament*, that for so many Ages have been dispersed both far and wide throughout the World, and from that Agreement which we find amongst them all, in thousands and thousands of Passages, about the Sense of which there is no Controversy: We are abundantly assured, that that Religion which we *Protestants* profess, and whereby we hope to be saved, was *delivered* to Mankind by God himself: And therefore, until our Adversaries can bring sufficient Proof that *He* requires something farther to be added to it, we think ourselves bound to rest where we are; and that it is sufficient for us to say for ourselves, After the Way which they call *Heresy*, so worship we God, and him alone, believing all Things that are written both in the *Old and New Testament*, which both they and we acknowledge to be of Divine Inspiration.

Fourthly, There being, at that Time, amongst the *Jews*, a certain Sect called *Sadduces*, who said that there was no *Resurrection*, neither *Angel* nor *Spirit*, (*Acts* xxiii. 8.) Therefore *St. Paul* upon this Occasion thought it proper expressly to add, that he had *Hope* towards God that there should be a *Resurrection* of the *Dead*, both of the *Just* and *Unjust*: But there being

no Controversy among those who profess Christianity about this grand Article of Faith itself, whatever different Notions some may have advanced, in order to explain the *Manner* of it, I shall not stand at present to enlarge upon it.

I proceed therefore to the fifth and last Thing observable in the Account which St. Paul gives of his Religion: *Herein* (says he) *do I exercise myself, to have always a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men.* In which Words we may observe,

First, His *Practice*, which was to have always a *Conscience void of Offence, &c.*

Secondly, His *Exercise*, in order to keep up to this Practice. *Herein do I exercise myself.*

First then of his *Practice*.

Whenever we desire to know the true and full Meaning of any Text of Holy Scripture; one of the best Ways of coming at it, will be to have Recourse to some other Passages thereof which manifestly tend to the same Purpose; and by comparing them together, we shall commonly find that whatever may seem a little dark or obscure in the one, will soon receive Light and Clearness from some of the others. Thus if we would thoroughly know what St. Paul means by *a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men*: His own Words of the like Import, in another Place, will best explain his Sense, 2 Cor. viii. 21. *Providing for honest Things, not only in the Sight of the Lord, but also in the Sight of Men.* He then who thus provides for honest Things, is the Man that has a *Conscience void of Offence*, according to St. Paul. And to the very same Purpose he speaks, Phil. iv. 8. *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatso-*

order Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report: If there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these Things. And again, (2 Cor. i. 12.) Our Rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshy Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World. As also St. Peter, (1 Epist. ii. 12.) Having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as Evil Doers, they may by your good Works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation. From these several Places of Scripture (not to mention any more) being compared together, every honest Christian, without having Recourse either to Criticisms or Philosophical Definitions, may sufficiently know what it is to have a Conscience void of Offence towards God, and towards Man, which was St. Paul's Practice; and that we may the better know how to imitate him herein, it will be of good Use to make these two Enquiries:

First, How far is it possible for any Man thus to have a Conscience void of Offence?

Secondly, Supposing a Man once to have such a Conscience; how far is it possible for him *always* to keep it so?

In answer to the first of these Questions, I lay down two Propositions, neither of which will require much Proof:

First, That no Man that is, or ever was, (JESUS CHRIST the Son of God excepted) either can or ever could justly pretend to have a Conscience wholly and altogether free from the Guilt of Sin. For,

besides the original Corruption, in which, by the Fall of our first Parents, we are all of us conceiv'd and born; there never was any Man, who once came to the Use of his Reason and Understanding, so as to be able to distinguish between Good and Evil, but must, upon a little Recollection, be conscious to himself that in very many Instances he has transgressed the Laws of God, sometimes by indulging himself in unlawful Desires, and sometimes by breaking out into sinful Words and Actions, contrary to that Duty which we owe to God, to our Neighbour, and to our Selves; and this is not only through Frailty or Infirmary, but too often out of gross Negligence, and sometimes through manifest Obstinacy and Willfulness: For the Truth of which I need only appeal to the Experience of every Man who will but be impartial in the Examination of himself. In this Sense, therefore, no Man can truly say that he has a *Conscience void of Offence*, or that he is perfectly innocent of all Sin. On the contrary, *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us, (1 John i. 8.) Both Jews and Gentiles are all under Sin. (Rom. iii. 9) There is none absolutely righteous, no not one, (v. 10.) For all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God. (v. 23.)*

But, Secondly, when by sincere Repentance, and a thorough Reformation of his Life, a Man has made his Peace with God, and when thus, by the Blood of Christ, his Conscience is purged from dead Works to serve the living God, (Heb. ix. 14.) he becomes so washed from his Sins in that Blood, (Rev. i. 5) and so cleansed from all Sin by it, (1 Joh. i. 7.) that he is presented unto God as perfect in Christ Jesus, (Col. i. 28.) As a pure and sound Member of his glorious Church, as not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any
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such thing, but as being Holy and without Blemish, (Eph. v. 27.)

In this Sense then, every sincere and penitent Christian has a *Conscience void of Offence*, or, as St. Paul elsewhere calls it, *a pure Heart and a good Conscience*, (1 Tim. i. 5) That is to say, he is so received and owned by the Mercy of God through Jesus Christ, as if he were altogether free from all Sin: *God blotteth out his Transgressions, and will not remember his Sins*, (Isa. xliii. 25.) *Tho' his Sins*, in themselves, be as *Scarlet*, they shall, through Christ, be as *white as Snow*; *tho' they be red like Crimson*, they shall be as *Wool*, (Isa. i. 18.) And thus St. Paul describes the State and Condition of the *Corinthians* after their Conversion to God through Christ: Formerly indeed they had been incapable of inheriting the Kingdom of God: But (says he) *ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justify'd in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

And thus I have done with the first Enquiry, which was, how far it is possible for any Man to have a Conscience void of Offence. I proceed to the

Second, which was, Supposing a Man once to have such a Conscience, in the Manner I have now given you an Account of it; how far is it possible for him *always* to keep it so. To have *ALWAYS* a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Man, as the Text expresses it. And here there are three Propositions, which, I think, will fully clear up this Matter.

First, It is *morally* impossible for any Man to keep himself wholly and altogether free from Sins of Infirmary.

By *Sins of Infirmary*, I mean such Sins as, taking Advantage of the Weakness and Frailty of our Nature,

ture, surprise us on a sudden, and laying quick hold on some of our Passions or corrupt Inclinations, scarce give us Time to think of what we are about to do, but hurry us away into some Speeches or Actions that are not agreeable to God's Law, even before we deliberate or well consider of the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness of them. Such Sins as these, proceeding rather from our natural Weakness, than from any wilful or deliberate Presumption, are usually called *Sins of Infirmary*.

We ought not indeed to say that it is *absolutely* impossible for any Man always to continue free even from such Sins as these: For this would be setting Bounds and Limits to the Power of God, who certainly might, if he so thought fit, give Grace and spiritual Strength even to a weak Man, sufficient, if rightly made use of, upon all Occasions whatever, to prevent his being surprised into *any* Sin, and to enable him to get the better of his *greatest* Infirmities. This, I say, is most certainly in God's Power to do, if he should so please, as well as it was at first to *make Man upright*, (Eccles. vii. 29.) and to give to him Ability so to have continued, if by the Freedom of his own Will, he had not made Sin his deliberate Choice. But since God has not thought fit (since the Fall of our first Parents) to give so large a Portion of Grace to any Man, his own Son excepted, unto whom the Spirit was *not given by Measure*, (Joh. iii. 34.) *for in him dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily*, (Col. ii. 9.) *and of his Fulness have we all received, and Grace for Grace*: On the contrary, since God has thought fit that this Life should be to us a Time of *Trial*, that in it we should not only *endure Temptation*, (Jam. i. 12.) but also *fall into divers Temptations*, (v. 2.) and since by Experience we find (to the great Mortification of our Pride) that the Combat between us, and the Temptations

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tations wherewith we are assaulted, is very often so doubtful, as that the best of us all must own that we are sometimes foiled and worsted by them; we may truly say that, *morally or practically* speaking, it is *impossible* for any Man *always* to keep himself pure and free, at least from *Sins of Infirmary*. In *many Things we offend all*, says St. James, (Ja. iii. 2.) Nor can any Man deny but that, sometimes by the Suddenness and sometimes by the Strength of a Temptation, he is often carried away, if not thro' Wilfulness, yet at least thro' Frailty and Weakness, into Things that are sinful. In this strict Sense of the Words, therefore, no Man must take upon him to *have always a Conscience void of Offence*, no Man must pretend that he is wholly free from Sins of Infirmary: *Who can say, I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin?* says the wise Man, (Prov. xx. 9.)

But here we must note, that altho', while we are clothed with frail Flesh and Blood, we cannot expect so wholly to overcome and subdue all our Infirmities, as *never* to be led a little astray by them; yet it is always our Duty to be, as much as is possible, upon our Guard against them, to *watch and pray that we enter not into Temptation*, (Mat. xxvi. 4.) and *strive to enter in at the straight Gate*, (Luke xiii. 24.) For if through our own Neglect, and for want of reasonable Care, any of our Infirmities get a complete Victory over us, and lead us captive, almost at their Pleasure, by reason of the faint Resistance which we make to them; the Sins, which by this Means we fall into, will no longer be look'd upon as Sins of Infirmary; but are justly to be imputed to us as wilful, deliberate, or habitual Sins; concerning which I am to speak in my two other Propositions,

Secondly,

Secondly, therefore, my next Proposition is, that through the Grace of God which is given to every one who carefully seeks it, and makes the right Use of it; it is very possible for a truly penitent Christian, who is diligent in watching over himself, always to keep himself free from *wilful* and *deliberate* Sins; that is to say, from all such Sins as he has Time beforehand to think of, and prepare himself against. Sins of Infirmary surprise us almost unawares, as I have already observed. But where we have Time to consider of an Action, and the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness thereof, before we enter upon it; in such a Case, if the Action plainly appears to be sinful, and yet we do it, we must not think that our Frailty or Infirmary will be an Excuse for us; for such a Sin, as this is *wilful* and *deliberate*, and the Fault of it wholly chargeable, not upon Infirmary, but Obstinacy or gross Neglect of him who commits it, because it was manifestly in his Power to have avoided it, if he had armed himself with such a firm Resolution against it, as the Nature of the Case supposes that he had both Time and Ability to make. For God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it, says St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 13.)

Indeed we may here appeal to the Conscience of every Man who will but be impartial, and is not given over to a reprobate Mind; let him but look back and consider, when at any time he lays under the strongest Temptation to any Sin, what Strength and Power he at that same time had to have resisted it, in case he had but heartily resolved so to do: At such a particular Time, good Company (as they are called) tempted him to the Sin of Drunkenness; or Resentment to the Sin of Revenge; or the Lucre of a good Bargain to lye or cheat; or some other Temptation

Temptation bore very strongly upon him; but still he had time to think and consider what he was about to do, and was sensible of the Unlawfulness of the Action to which he was so tempted, and yet would not forbear to do it: In all such Cases as these, I say, we may appeal to his own Conscience, whether at that very time he did not find in himself sufficient Power, if he would but have made use of it, to avoid that very Sin into which he was thus deliberately drawn: Might he not, if he had so resolved, have avoided or quitted the Company, have laid aside his Resentment, have preferred a good Conscience to unlawful Gain, and either have resisted or fled from whatever other we may suppose the Temptation to have been? Let him but seriously consider the Matter, and his own Conscience will bear Witness against him, that he never fell into any *deliberate* Sin, but what he might even easily have avoided, in case he would but have made use of that Portion of the Grace of God, with which the present Case supposes him to be endowed. Even the greatest Reprobate or Profligate, may find by himself that, for *Worldly* Considerations, he can at any time forego the greatest Pleasures, and resist the strongest Temptations; and why may we not suppose that the Fear of offending God, and of being everlastingly punished, together with the Hope of eternal Happiness in the Life to come, may have as strong Influence upon a Christian endowed with the Grace of God, as any worldly Fear or Hope, how great soever, are commonly known to have upon those who act upon no other Principle but that of corrupt Nature? If then we will but judge impartially, we must allow that every Penitent Christian may, through the Grace of God, and his own Watchfulness and Diligence, for ever keep himself free from *wilful* and *deliberate* Sins; which was my second Proposition.

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My third is this ; That, through the same Grace of God, it is very possible for every Penitent Christian always to keep himself free from *Customary* or *Habitual* Sins. When a Man often falls into one and the same Sin, and seldom resists the Temptation to it, we say that such a Sin is grown *habitual*, or *customary* to him. Thus some Men get a *Habit* of Drunkenness, others of Swearing and Cursing, others of Lying, and so of many other Sins ; Now however a *single Act* of any of these Sins may sometimes surprise even a good Man, and so be reckoned upon the score of *Infirmity* ; yet the *Habit* or *Custom* of any Sin whatever, can only proceed from the want of that Care and Diligence which every Man ought to use either to prevent it or break himself of it ; and therefore is always to be charged as a gross and *wilful* Neglect : But I have already shewn, in my second Proposition, that a Penitent Christian may, through God's Grace and his own Endeavours, for ever keep himself free from *wilful* Sins ; and if so, then, consequently, from *habitual* or *customary* ones.

And here I may again appeal to every Man's own Conscience : Hast thou watched diligently over thy self ? Hast thou firmly purposed and resolved to break off that Habit of Sin which thou hast contracted ? Hast thou frequently renewed these thy good Purposes and Resolutions ? And hast thou often begged of God to assist thee by his Grace in the keeping of them ? If thou continuest to do all this, not in an hypocritical and superficial Manner, but honestly, heartily and sincerely ; Thou hast the same Promise of God, which I but now mentioned, that he will not be wanting to thee : For God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it, (1 Cor. x. 13.) Nor is it to be imagined that he should so often, in Holy Scripture, require and

and exhort us to break off from all our evil Courses, if he did not afford us the Power of keeping ourselves free at least from common Customs and Habits of sinning; But if thou hadst made no such Resolutions or Purposes at all, or made them so coolly and negligently as if thou hadst no mind to keep them; thou must not then complain of want of Power; for it is only the want of thine own hearty and diligent Endeavours, which occasions thy Continuance under any such Habits or Customs.

And thus have I done with the second Enquiry; the Substance of my Answer to which, is this in short. Altho' during our whole Life, we must constantly strive even against *Sins of Infirmary*; yet in this World, which is a Place of continual Tryal, it is not to be expected that we should get a compleat and absolute Victory over them: But as for *wilful* and *deliberate Sins*, as also such as are *customary* or *habitual*, it is very possible for every Penitent Christian, by the Grace of God and his own hearty Endeavours, to keep himself at all times free from them. And let thus much suffice to have been spoken concerning St. Paul's *Practice*, which was *always to have a Conscience void of Offence*; and how far it is possible for us to imitate him here.

If any one shall yet be farther desirous to know the distinct meaning of those two Expressions in the Text, *towards God and towards Man*, he may take it thus briefly; When a Man leads his Life according to the Rules which I have but now laid down; when he watches and strives against *Sins of Infirmary*, and keeps himself free from such as are *wilful* or *deliberate*, *habitual* or *customary*; and if at any Time he falls into a Sin either of the one sort or the other, in a true penitent Manner, flies to God for Pardon, and renews both his Resolutions and Diligence to keep himself clear as far as is possible, from all Sin

whatsoever, such a Man as this (and such a Man only) may be said to *have a Conscience void of Offence toward God*, who knows the very Secrets of his Heart: And if the Man is also careful so to guide and conduct all his Actions, as to give no just Cause to the World to suspect him for an Hypocrite; but *lets his Light so shine before Men, that they may see his good Works, and glorify not himself, but his Father which is in Heaven.* (Mat. v. 16.) Then he may be also said to have *a Conscience void of Offence toward Man*: But however fairly a Man outwardly appears to carry himself toward the World, yet if his Heart be not sincere and upright before God, he is a Deceiver and an Hypocrite, and cannot truly be said to *have a Conscience void of Offence* towards the one or the other.

I come now to the other Thing proposed to be considered, under this fifth and last Head, which was St. Paul's *Exercise*, in order to keep up to this his Practice: *Herein do I EXERCISE myself* (says he) *to have always a Conscience void of Offence, &c.*

What the Particulars were wherein St. Paul *exercised himself*, in order to the keeping of his *Conscience void of Offence*, he has not indeed here told us; but they are most plainly to be gather'd both from the Reason of the Thing, and from many Passages of the Holy Scriptures.

And if we resolve to keep our Consciences as pure and clear as St. Paul did his, it is most evident that there are three Things wherein we must constantly and carefully *Exercise* ourselves, as it is not to be doubted but that he did himself.

First, We must very frequently examine ourselves,
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and seriously enquire what Sins we have been guilty of, of which we have not thoroughly repented; and what evil Inclinations we have within us, which as yet we have not sufficiently mortified. He that would keep his Body in Health, ought well to enquire not only into the Diseases with which he is actually troubled, but also into those to which he is inclined or disposed; because otherwise it will not be possible for him, by proper Remedies, to prevent the one or cure the other. Now Sin is the Disease of the Soul or Conscience, from which if a Man heartily desires to keep himself free, he must proceed in the same Method, and diligently set himself to learn, not only how far he is already infected with it, but also what farther or other Infection he is manifestly in danger of, altho' perhaps he may not as yet be seized by it. *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies,* says the Holy Psalmist, *Psal. cxix. 59.* *Let us search and try our Ways, and turn again to the Lord,* says the Prophet, *Lam. iii. 40.* *Let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup,* says St. Paul, *1 Cor. xi. 28.* And again, *examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith, prove your own selves,* *2 Cor. xiii. 5.* From which and many more Passages of Holy Scripture that may be brought, it manifestly appears that Self-Examination is a most necessary Duty to be performed by every one who would maintain and keep a good and upright Conscience.

Whosoever thou art then that hast seriously resolved to keep thy Conscience void of Offence, let this be the first Part of thy Exercise in order thereunto; let not a Day pass over thy Head without calling thyself to some Account; and be sure to set apart some time at least every Lord's Day, for the more solemn Performance of this Work of Self-Examination.

amination. Consider the several Branches of God's Law, whereby thou art to be directed in the Performance of the several Duties which thou owest to God, to thyself and to all Mankind: Bring all thy past Actions, Words, and most secret Desires, as far as thou canst well recollect them, to be tryed by this Rule; and enquire, without Favour or Partiality to thyself, in what Particulars thou hast departed from it, and hast not yet truly repented and humbled thyself before God for the same; look carefully into the most hidden Recesses and Motions of thy Soul, and find out the most secret Inclinations to Wickedness that there lye lurking, and ready upon every Opportunity to break out into Words or Actions; and never leave off repeating this sort of Examination and Enquiry, until thou becomeest thoroughly acquainted with thyself and with thine own ways, and hast clearly discovered all the Diseases and Indispositions of thy Soul. In which Work as we all proceed, we must take care,

Secondly, To apply the proper Remedy toward the preventing or freeing ourselves from every Sin, as soon as we discover the Guilt of it, or an Inclination to it within us. For as it often falls out in the Body, that a Disease which might easily have been cured when it was first discovered, grows stronger and stronger by being neglected, until in time it becomes perhaps incurable; so is it very frequently, in the Diseases and Distempers of the Soul or Conscience: When first a Man takes Notice that he is guilty of this or that Sin, that he has contracted any Habit, or has a strong Inclination to any sort of Wickedness; if immediately, and without delay, he betakes himself to the proper Means and Method of reforming and rectifying what he thus finds amiss in himself or in his Conduct; he may, with no great Difficulty,

Difficulty, both resolve to become a good and virtuous Man, and put such his Resolution into Execution: But the longer we neglect the proper Remedies, the more our spiritual as well as bodily Diseases increase, our evil Inclinations grow into Habits, our evil Habits grow every Day more strong, and produce more and more evil Actions, until by long Custom, Sin takes such deep Root in us, as, never, or at least, not without the greatest Difficulty, to be eradicated or overcome.

It is not my Design, at present to give an Account of the several Remedies that are to be made use of against each particular Sin, which would necessarily engage me in a whole System of Christian Morality: But yet it will be proper here to take Notice that these Remedies are of two Sorts. Some are general, and equally to be applied and made use of against all Sins whatever; As Praying, Reading, Meditating, often preparing for, and duly receiving the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, avoiding wicked and prophane Company, and conversing, as much as may be, with those who are virtuous and religious: These are Means at all Times to be made use of, against all sorts of Sins; just as good Diet, good Air, and moderate Exercise are always proper to keep the Body in right Order, and preserve it from all sorts of Distempers. Other Remedies there are, which (like what they call *Specifick Medicines* in Physick) are peculiarly adapted to this or that particular Sin, but not so to others: Thus rigorous Fasting and Abstinence are commonly of excellent use towards mortifying and subduing the Sins of *Lust* and *Sensuality*: But prescribe the same to a *Covetous* Man, and they will probably feed his Distemper, because he finds that thereby he can save Money: And if you would cure a Man of *sordid Covetousness*, it is good

good to press and stir him up not only to Acts of *Charity*, but *Liberality* also; but if you should take the same way with a *prodigal Spendthrift*, you may perhaps only nourish his *Vanity* and *Folly*: For as in the Distempers of the Body, so also in those of the Soul, the Nature and Symptoms of the Disease are well to be considered, and such particular Methods to be prescribed as are peculiarly adapted to take away the Cause of it; but yet with such Prudence and Caution as not to run the Patient from one extrem into another, which may perhaps be altogether as dangerous.

When therefore, by a diligent and frequent Examination of ourselves, we have made a sufficient Discovery of our several Sins, and wicked Inclinations, which are the Sores and Diseases of our Souls: Our next Business is, to consider, and duly apply all those Remedies both general and particular, which are proper for the Cure of them. In Bodily Distempers, Nature and a sound Constitution, will sometimes effect a Cure, without the use of any other Medicine; But our *Spiritual Constitution* (as I may call it, is so vitiated by that Original Corruption which dwelleth in us, that it is impossible for us to keep a clean Heart, or a *Conscience void of Offence*, except, with Care and Diligence, we constantly stir up that Portion of Grace, whatever it be, which God is pleased to give us, in order to Subdue and Mortify all our evil Habits and Inclinations. And thus much may suffice to be spoken of the second Thing, wherein we ought to *Exercise* ourselves.

But there is a third Thing wherein we must also diligently exercise our selves, or else it will not be possible for us to keep and preserve a *Conscience void of Offence*; That is to say, We must make it our constant

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constant Care and Endeavour, through the whole Course of Life, still to improve in Virtue and Piety, and by no means to remain at a Stand; but constantly to grow better and better, as long as it shall please God that we live in the World. Thus we are directed by St. Peter, (2 Pet. i. 5.) *Giving all Diligence* (says he) *add to your Faith, Virtue; and to Virtue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly-kindness; and to Brotherly-kindness, Charity: Which things* (as he gives us to understand, v. 8.) *ought not on'y to be in us, but also to abound, if we would not be look'd upon as Barren or Unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: And with the like Admonition he concludes his Epistle, bidding us to grow in Grace, as well as in that same saving Knowledge. For this very Purpose it was that God appointed Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists in his Church of old, and a Succession of Pastors and Teachers to continue therein for ever; For the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the Edifying of the Body of Christ; till we all come ----- unto a Perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the fulness of Christ, (Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.) Thus St. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians; We beseech you Brethren and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more: 1 Thess. 4. 1) To which his own Practice was fully conformable; Brethren (says he) I count not myself to have apprehended, (that is to say, to have arrived to such a State of Perfection, as that I need grow no better) But this one Thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth at those things which are before, I press toward the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. iii. 13, 14. As if he had said, I do not please*

please myself, with looking back at what I have well done; But I still keep my Thought fix'd upon the everlasting Happiness of Heaven, and daily strive to grow better and better, that I may be the fitter for it, and the more sure of obtaining it.

With respect to what we are now discoursing of, Man is justly compared to a Boat rowing against the Stream: If the Rowers stop their Hands, tho' but for a very short Time, the Boat is presently borne down by the Current: And if ever we cease to strive against our natural Corruption, it will be sure to gain more and more upon us, and carry us still back into Sin: In this case there is no standing still: Either we must constantly endeavour to grow better, or else we shall be sure to grow worse.

Here then let every Man consider and enquire into himself, after this Manner: What Sort of a Man was I, Ten, or Twenty Years ago? Was I a Sensual, Lustful, or Intemperate Man? Was I Proud, Envious, Ill-natured, Covetous, Hard hearted, Uncharitable? Or what were the Sins to which I was then most addicted or inclined? And how much better am I grown at this Time? Perhaps I am not able to sin at the Rate I formerly did; my Strength, or my Circumstances will not allow me so to do: But have I not the same Unmortified *Inclinations* and *Desires* which I then had? And if I were now as Young, as Strong, every way as able to pursue the Things of the World and the Flesh, as once I was, would I not follow the same Course which then I did? Or whatever seeming Reformation appears in my outward Behaviour, Is it not much more owing to *Necessity* than to my own Choice? And if this be the Case with him, let him know that he is far from having a *Conscience void of Offence*; It being a daily

daily Addition to the Guilt of all his other Sins, that he has not all along been diligent in his Endeavours to grow better and better, and make more and more Improvement in Virtue and Piety; which since he has done, he therefore is a *worse* Man in the Sight of God than even formerly he was, however he may appear in the Sight of the World: And therefore if in earnest he would Purge his Conscience, and make it truly clean, he must set himself thoroughly and heartily to reform his inner Man, and never intermit the constant Application both of the General and Particular Remedies to his several Sins, until, through the Grace of God, he has effectually mortified all his wicked Habits, and gotten so compleat a Victory over all his Sinful Desires, as always to Curb them, whenever they would draw him into any wilful or deliberate Transgression, or even to give a willing, tho' secret Consent to any thing that is Sinful. In a Word, he must never give off his Endeavours, until by Experience he finds that *God has created a clean Heart and renewed a right Spirit within him*, Psal. li. 10. And when this is done, he will soon find that there will be a necessity of the same Endeavours, the same Praying, Watching, Meditating, Practising, and every other thing whatsoever, to *keep* his Heart clean, as there was at first to make it so, to strengthen him more and more against the frequent Assaults of *Sin* and *Satan*, as there was once to enable him to get a compleat Victory over them.

And thus I have done with the last thing proposed to be considered, which was *St. Paul's Exercise* in order to keep his *Conscience void of Offence*; Wherein if we would imitate him, we must, as I have shewn, First, frequently and seriously examine our selves; Secondly, apply all proper Remedies; both general and

and particular, to the several Sins which we discover in our selves; and Thirdly, give all Diligence to grow in Grace, and daily to improve in true Virtue and Piety, even to the very end of our Lives.

It remains now that I add a Word or two, by way of Motive or Encouragement to us all, to be diligent in this *Practice* of keeping a *Conscience void of Offence*, and industrious in that *Exercise* which I have shewn to be necessary in order thereunto. And here there is one single *Consideration* which, in my Opinion, includes all that can be said upon this Occasion, which is, that a *Conscience void of Offence*, and the Prospect it gives us of Eternal Happiness, is the only real Comfort and Support which a Man can have in all Estates and Conditions of Life, particularly in the Time of Trouble and Affliction, and above all, when he comes to lie upon a Death-Bed.

Let us suppose a Man to be in Health, Wealth, and Prosperity, but, at the same time, that whenever he gives way to a serious Thought, his Conscience accuses him that he has lived in a Course of wilful Sin, and continues still therein without true Repentance, and therefore that whenever this short Life shall have an End, he has nothing to expect but the Wrath of God and Everlasting Punishment; It is impossible for such a Man, while these Thoughts possess him to receive any *Solid Comfort* from the Enjoyments of this World: But let us farther suppose, that such a Man falls into Poverty, that Pain and Sickness overtake him, and that at last he comes to have a very near Prospect of his Departure out of this Life; What Horror and Amazement must needs seize him! He has lived for a considerable Number of Years, during all which

which time he has often been put in mind of the many Obligations that lye upon him to serve and obey God; He is now in Trouble and Affliction, sees Death, the King of Terrors, approaching, and dreads the dismal Consequences that are to follow: In this Condition he stands in the greatest need of Comfort; but where is it to be had? The World has forsaken him, or if he had it all at his Command, it could not rescue him from Death and Hell: What must he do then? Would he fly to God, who indeed is our only sure Refuge in the Time of Anguish and Distress! Alas, his Conscience upbraids him that he is in no Condition to find Acceptance there; That there was a time when God called, and he refused, when God stretch'd out his Hand to receive him, but he regarded it not, but set at nought all that Divine Counsel and Reproof which had been offered to him; That now there is much Reason to apprehend that the Case is quite altered, and that God only laughs at his Calamity, and mocks when his Fear cometh; That now his Fear cometh as Desolation, and his Destruction as a Whirlwind, Distress and Anguish cometh upon him; he may call upon God, but God will not hear him; he may seek him early, but not find him; For that in all this long time past, he hated true practical saving Knowledge, and tho' often put in mind of it, yet did not choose the Fear of the Lord. This is what God expressly threatens wicked Men with, Prov. i. 24. And when once a Man comes to have such a wounded Spirit as this, we may well ask, with the Wise Man, who can bear it? Prov. xviii. 14.

But, on the other hand, if a Man can, with all Truth and Sincerity, say thus of himself, I have now for a long time heartily and sincerely endeavoured to make my Peace with God by a sincere Repentance, and a thorough Reformation, not only of my out-

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ward Actions, but also my inward and most secret Desires; I have very often considered what are the several Commands which he has given us, and have made it my great Business, through his Grace and Assistance, to bring my self to such an Holy Temper, as to be ready and willing to give an hearty Obedience to every one of them; I have been constant in the Worship of God both publick and private, and frequent at the Holy Communion, for which I have always endeavoured to prepare myself, not so much by a little Extraordinary Devotion for a few Days before, as by a constant regular Christian Life; I have made it my first and chief Care to dispose my Heart to love God, to fear him, to honour him, and to put my whole Trust and Dependance continually in and upon him and his good Providence; I have also honestly endeavoured to do my Duty to all Mankind, to entertain no Malice or Hatred against the Person of any Man, no, not even of my greatest Enemy, but to have true Charity for every Man, and to be willing to do him Good when I have it in my Power; To wrong no Man by Word or Deed, and if I have done any Wrong to any Man, to make him the best Amends I can, and to render unto all Men whatever is due to them, in their several Stations and Relations to me, whether it be by the Laws of God, or those of the Country where I dwell. And, Lastly, I have endeavoured to mortify and subdue all my unruly Lusts, Passions and Desires, and by no means to give them any farther Liberty than what is every way consistent with the Duty of a Christian: And if sometimes, through Frailty and Infirmary, I have been transported or carryed away to say or do any thing that was Sinful, I have immediately fled to God, and humbled my self before him for the same, beseeching him, for Christ's sake, to pardon what is past, and to give me

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his Grace that I may be more watchful and careful for the time to come. If without Hypocrisy, or Self-deceit, a Man's Heart can assure him that he has thus led his Life for a considerable time past, and has a most firm Resolution to continue exactly in the same way to the very end of his Days; his *Conscience*, being thus *purged from dead Works*, and giving him the greatest Assurance that he is in the Favour of God, becomes a continual Feast unto him: If he is in Prosperity, he looks upon the good Things which he enjoys as coming from the hand of God's Providence, and as Instruments whereby we may be the better enabled to do good in the World, for which he should be sure of an abundant Reward hereafter: Or if Trouble and Affliction fall upon him, he receives these things in an humble manner, as Chastisements coming from the hand of a gracious Father, and most certainly designed for his Good, if he makes the right use of them. In all Estates and Conditions of Life, he says, with St. Paul, *My Rejoycing is this, the Testimony of my Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshy Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, I have had my Conversation in the World*, 2 Cor. i. 12. And when he comes to lye upon his Death Bed, he again says, with him, *I have Fought a good Fight, I have manfully struggled with the Vanities, Follies and Temptations of this World, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith, and shewn it by my Works*, (Jam. ii. 18.) Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give me at that Day; and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing, 2 Tim. iv. 8.

This is the last and solid Comfort of having and always keeping a Conscience void of Offence; And when the Time comes, as sooner or later it must come,

that all Worldly Comforts fail and forsake us, this, if we take care to maintain it, will be a Stay and Support to us in our greatest Agonies, and never leave us until it has brought us into that blessed Place where there is *Fulness of Joy, and Pleasures for evermore.* Psal. xvi. 11.

Let us, therefore, hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter; Let us truly Fear God, and Faithfully keep his Commandments; For this is the only way to have always a Conscience void of Offence; And this is the whole Duty, the whole Interest, the whole Concern of Man: This, and this alone, is what will make him as truly Happy as he is capable of in this Life, and, through God's Mercy, Eternally so in the Life to come.

Now to God the Father, &c,

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A
True Church-Man

SET IN A

Just and Clear Light:

OR, AN

ESSAY

Towards the

RIGHT CHARACTER

OF

A FAITHFUL SON of the
ESTABLISH'D CHURCH.

By the most Reverend

Dr. *EDWARD SYNGE*,

Late Lord Archbishop of TUAM in IRELAND.

The Second EDITION Corrected.

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WHEN, the other Day, at Mr. B's Lodging, to one that asked me whether I were a *high* or a *low Church-man*, I made answer that I hoped I was neither; for that I so well approved of the Constitution of our Church, as far as I understood it, that, with God's Blessing, I was fully resolved in all Things to conform to it, and willingly to act neither *above* nor *below* it; and that therefore, with relation to the establish'd Church, I would own no other Title but that of a *true Church-man*: You may remember you said you would gladly know from me the exact Character of such a *true Church-man*, and how he is to be distinguished from both the others. In return to which Request of yours, I here send you the most faithful Draught that I am able to make, according to the best of my Apprehensions of him: But how he is to be distinguish'd, and in what and how many Things he differs from the *high* or *low Church-man*; or whether he differs at all from the honest and sincere Men of both Appellations, I must leave to your own Determination,

having never yet been able to find any exact and settled meaning of these Terms, to which both the contending Parties, that use them, will agree.

By a *Church-man* we all mean a *Christian who embraces the Communion of the established Church* : To this add the Word *true*, and then the Character of a *true Church-man* will be, First, That he is a *true Christian* ; and Secondly, That he *truly, and not in Pretence only, embraces the Communion of the establish'd Church*.

First then, *A true Church-man is a true Christian* : That is to say, he unfeignedly, not only in the general, believes that the Religion which was taught by *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles is the true Religion ; but also embraces and gives his Assent to every Doctrine that appears from the Holy Scriptures to have been taught by them : And where any Doubt arises concerning the Sense of Scripture, he not only endeavours to clear it by comparing parallel Places ; but also pays a great Deference, in all such Cases, to the Opinion of the antient Fathers of the Christian Church ; who being Men of great and undoubted Integrity, and also living, some in the *Apostles* Time, and others very near it, must needs be very proper Judges of the true Meaning of what they both taught and writ. Nor is it to him

him an Objection against any such Doctrine, that the Thing is above his Reason, or that he cannot frame a clear and adequate Notion in his Mind of it : For altho' it is absolutely impossible for a rational Being to give his Assent to Contradictions, or consequently, to believe any thing which plainly appears to be contrary to the evident Principles of Reason : Yet considering, that as long as we are in this World, *We know but in part, and prophesy in part,* 1. Cor. xiii. 9. And *we see* (almost all Things indeed, as some late Philosophers have undertaken to prove, but more especially the Things of God) but as *through a Glass* ; that is, *darkly, et avissualit*, as it were *in a Riddle*, as the Margin of our Bibles has it, v. 12. Considering this, I say, he is well assured that many Things may be, and are true, which yet are beyond or very difficult to his Conception : And therefore thinks himself bound to believe whatsoever God has delivered in his holy Word, according to the usual Meaning and Acceptation of the Terms or Expressions, altho' he has but very obscure and analogous Notions of the Things so delivered.

Again, As a true Christian, he not only assents to and believes whatever he can find that God has declared ; but he also makes it his great Care and Study, first, to know,

and then conscientiously to practice all and every part of his Duty. What God has commanded he will not willingly omit: What he has forbidden he will not do, or comply with: In those Things where the Law of God has determined nothing, to the best of his Knowledge and Power, he acts according to the Rules of Christian Prudence, so as to give as little Offence to any one as possibly he can: And where lawful Authority enacts any thing that is not contrary to the Laws of God, he gives Obedience to it, *not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake.*

Nor lastly, does our *Church-man*, as a *Christian*, think it enough to have a true Faith, and himself to lead a good and godly Life; but he judges it to be an inseparable Property of true Godliness, in his Station, to do whatever in him lies, in order to bring others also to the same Profession and Practice: And therefore he takes care not only to be *holy*, but also *exemplary* in his Life; and to *let his Light so shine before Men, that they, seeing his good Works, may follow his Example*; and thereby advance the Honour of his Church and Religion, *and glorify his Father which is in Heaven*, Matth. v. 16. Nor does he fail, as Occasion offers, (besides shewing in his Life a good Example) to make use
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of sober and modest Reproofs, Admonitions, and whatever other Means may be proper for him, to stop the Course of Vice and Infidelity, and promote the Practice of true Virtue and Piety, amongst all Persons whatsoever, with whom he has any Intercourse or Converse.

Thus does our *true Church-man* make it the first and chief Part of his Care, not only to be, but also (as far as without Pride or Affectation he may) to *appear* a serious and *true Christian*. And altho' he cannot but *rejoice* whenever he finds the Interest of the Church to be promoted, altho' it be done even by wicked Men; as *St. Paul* did, that *Christ was preached*, tho' *not sincerely*, but *in Pretence*, and out of *Envy*, *Strife* and *Contention*, *Phil. i. 18.* yet wherever a Man is known to be tainted with any Principles, or to allow himself in any Omissions or Practices that are contrary to, or inconsistent with, the Purity and Strictness of the Gospel; however zealous he may appear for the Church, yet he can never look upon him as a *true Church-man*, any more than *St. Paul* did upon those envious and contentious Preachers as good Christians. And thus much for the first Part of our *Church-man's* Character; *he is a true Christian*. I proceed to the

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the Communion of the establish'd Church.
That is to say,

First, *He unfeignedly believes that in the Communion of our Church, as by Law establish'd, nothing is wanting that is necessary to eternal Salvation.* He is fully persuaded that we embrace all the Articles of the Christian Faith; teach all the Rules of a pious and good Life; and omit no part of *Christ's* Institution in the Administration either of Baptism or the Lord's Supper: Nor does he apprehend any more to be necessary to any Man's Salvation, besides a true Faith, a holy Life, to be regularly admitted into the Church by Baptism, and to partake of the Benefits of *Christ's* Passion, by a due Participation of that Bread and that Cup which he himself has appointed for that Purpose. And therefore a *true Church-man* thinks he may safely challenge all the World to prove that any thing is or can be necessary for the Attainment of everlasting Happiness, which is not as effectually to be had in the establish'd Church, as in any Society of Christians in the World.

Secondly, *He is no less unfeignedly of Opinion that our Church requires nothing that is, or can be a hindrance of Salvation, from any one who communicates with her.* He knows nothing that can obstruct the Salvation of any Man, but *Sin*; nor can he allow any thing

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thing to be a *Sin*, but what is a *Transgression of God's Law*, 1 John iii. 4. For *where there is no Law there is no Transgression*, Rom. iv. 15. that is to say, no Sin. Here therefore he requires our Adversaries to produce any one *Law of God*, and to shew that any thing prescribed by our Church, is either expressly or by good consequence contrary thereto: And until this be done, (which tho' often demanded never yet has been done) however some Things in our Constitution may be plausibly declaimed against by some that are disaffected to it; (and what almost is there against which ingenious Men cannot frame some sort of Objections) yet as long as nothing is therein to be found, but what, upon the strictest Examination, will abide the Test of God's Law; he concludes that there is no manner of Sin, and therefore no Obstacle to Salvation in our Communion: And therefore when he finds our Adversaries, with much Noise and seeming Pomp, dressing up their Objections against the establish'd Church in hard Words, and obscure and doubtful Expressions; such as *Popery or symbolizing with Papists, Will-worship, Superstition, significant or symbolical Ceremonies, making of new Sacraments*, and the like; he takes it for a certain Sign that they dare not set their Cause in the true

true Light, and therefore endeavour as much as they can, to perplex and darken it, by such Phrases as are beyond the Understanding of the common People, whom they endeavour to frighten with such Visions as Men of Sense and Thought may well despise. For let them but once clearly and distinctly tell us what they mean by *Popery, Will-worship, Superstition, &c.* and then shew that these Things, *in the Notion they explain them, are contrary to some Law of God*, which they must produce; and lastly, that our Church is guilty of these Things or any one of them, *in that very same Notion*; and then they will take the right way to make it appear, that there is just Ground for their Separation from her. But since this never has, nor, as he thinks, can be done, he is of Opinion, that neither a *Church-man*, nor indeed any Man that is impartial, can see any just Reason for refusing any thing that is in itself lawful, and requir'd by lawful Authority, only because some Men who are disaffected to our Constitution, are pleased to give it a hard and odious Name. For not the *Name*, but the *Nature* of a thing must always be our Direction in the Acceptance or Refusal of it.

And here if we impartially, and without Prejudice, do but consider the true *Nature* of those Constitutions of our Church that

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are so much cry'd out against (which must chiefly be gathered from the *Design* and Intention of the Church itself in appointing them) it may well raise our Wonder how it is possible for Men of Candour and Ingenuity to frame any Objection against the *Lawfulness* of them. In all public Transactions, whether Sacred or Civil, it has ever been found, if not absolutely necessary, yet highly expedient, to fix and determine some certain outward Rites and Observances; sometimes for the Distinction of Persons one from another, sometimes for the Preservation of Order and Regularity, and sometimes as Signs and Tokens, or Memorials of what is or ought to be the Design of the Person or Persons that perform or are engaged in such a Transaction. And where God himself has not fix'd and determin'd these outward Things (as in most Cases he did in the *Jewish* Church) either Custom, or positive human Authority has always been found more or less to have done it. Of this, in Civil Matters, the Instances are notorious, as the Difference of Garments and Robes for the Distinction of Sexes, Qualities and Stations; the Formalities observed in passing of Laws, and electing and inaugurating of Magistrates; signing, sealing, and delivering of Writings in token of the Reality of Intention

tion in the Parties who thereby bind and oblige themselves ; and (to omit other Instances) the giving of a Twig and a Sod in token of Livery of Seisin of Land. Then, as for things Sacred, what Christian Church is there upon Earth that has not some Rites or Ceremonies, or outward Observances, either by Law or Custom established among them for the Ends above-mention'd? Read but the first Section of Mr. *Durel's* Book, entitled, *A View of the Government and public Worship of God in the reformed Churches beyond the Seas* ; and it will give you abundant Satisfaction in this Point. And even our own Dissenters, who endeavour to represent our Rites and Ceremonies with such a formidable Aspect, have not with all their Care been able to keep themselves free from some Things of the like Nature. Thus for Example, their *Directory for public Worship* plainly supposes an Appointment of Time and Place for such Worship, and expressly settles the Method in which it is to be performed : In the Celebration of the Lord's Supper it prescribes the Posture of sitting, and in Matrimony the Ceremony of joining of Hands ; their *solemn League and Covenant* (to which they swore) was ordered to be taken *with Hands lifted up* : And altho' all Dissenters that own the Lawfulness of taking an Oath, do allow it to
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be an Act of *religious Worship* (that is to say, whereby we express the Honour and Reverence we have for God) yet I never could hear of any of them who made the least Scruple of the *Ceremony* of laying the Hand upon the Holy Bible and kissing it, as a *Sign* or *Token* of the solemn calling of God to witness. And now, after all this, how strange is it that such great Fault should be found with our Church, and even a Separation made from it, on account of such very Things as these, no way unlawful in themselves, and appointed only and altogether for the decent and laudable Ends above-mention'd ! For it is notorious, that we place no intrinsic Holiness in a Linnen Garment ; only the Church appoints a Surplice to be worn by the Minister that officiates, as a decent Distinction between him and the People : Our Rubrick expressly declares, that by kneeling at the Holy Communion *no Adoration is intended either to the Bread and Wine, or to any corporeal Presence of the natural Flesh and Blood of Christ*. But that *this Order is meant for a Signification of our humble and grateful Acknowledgment of the Benefits of Christ, &c.* nor is the Cross after Baptism appointed for any other Purpose but expressly as a *Token*, or Memorial to all Persons baptized, that they be not ashamed to confess the Faith of

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Christ crucified, &c. It is not my Design here to descend to the Particulars of this Controversy : But our Church, in the short Discourse of *Ceremonies* before the Book of *Common Prayer*, having expressly own'd that her Ceremonies *have been devised by Men*, and therefore are not obtruded upon the People as of Divine Institution ; that they are retained amongst us *for a decent Order in the Church, and because they pertain to Edification* — and *to stir up the dull Mind of Man to the Remembrance of his Duty to God* ; and therefore are not by any to be looked upon as new Sacraments or Instruments of conveying God's Grace to us ; and that *the keeping or omitting of a Ceremony, in itself considered, is but a small Thing* ; but *the wilful and contemptuous Transgression, and breaking of a common Order and Discipline*, is in this Case the *Offence before God*. Our Church, I say, having made this clear and full Declaration of her Meaning ; he that shall yet condemn any of her Rites or Ceremonies as *unlawful*, must at the same time also condemn kneeling, lifting up the Hands or Eyes in Prayer, joyning of Hands in Marriage, kissing of the Book in taking of an Oath, and whatever else either Law or Custom has establish'd either here or any where else in religious Performances for the same Ends
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that our Church has propos'd in the appointing or retaining of all or any of such her Constitutions. But to return from this Digression.

Thirdly, *It is, in like manner, the settled Judgment of our Church-man, that wherever a Church by lawful Authority establish'd, neither wants any thing that is necessary to Salvation, nor requires any thing that is a Hindrance of it; with such a Church it is lawful for any Christian to join in Communion.* And consequently, that the Communion of our Church neither is, nor can be look'd upon as unlawful; except a Man should be so absurd as to say, that it may be unlawful to do a Thing, tho' no Law of God or Man has any way (whether expressly or by consequence) forbidden it.

Fourthly and lastly, And since it is beyond dispute the Duty of every Christian to do whatsoever *lawfully* he may for the maintaining the Peace and Unity both of the Church universal, and also of each and every part of it; *It is also the Opinion and Judgment of our Church-man, that wherever the Communion of an establish'd Church is lawful and sufficient to Salvation; there of necessity it must be unlawful to set up any separate Church or Congregation in Opposition to her.* For if once it be allow'd, as lawful, thus to divide from such a Church, it

will, he thinks, be impossible to find out any Rule or Principle upon which to put a stop to perpetual Divisions after Divisions, as Men's Fancies may incline them farther and farther to depart from each other, until every single Man comes to stand separate by himself, and no such thing as a *Christian Society* or *Congregation* remains upon the Earth; and yet no Man to be blamed for this Separation: Which how it can consist with the Notion of a *Church* or *Congregation*, ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ, or the Illustrations of that Notion, which we meet with in holy Scripture, from a Body and its Members; a Kingdom, a City, a Family, and the People that compose it, a Sheep-fold, with divers others, which all do denote that Unity and Society which all Christians are obliged to maintain and keep up one with another, he leaves to the serious Consideration of those Men, whose Practices cannot be justified but upon such dividing Principles: And therefore it is with him an undoubted Conclusion, That to divide from the establish'd Church of England, as it now stands, or to set up any other Church or Congregation in Opposition to her, within those Precincts where she is so establish'd, is altogether sinful and unlawful. And thus much for the Second Part of a true Church-man's Character, which is, *That he truly embraces*

embraces the Communion of the establish'd Church. Give me leave, from what has been said, to draw the three following Corollaries.

First, Whereas, in some Things that are confessedly not necessary to Salvation, many learned Men of several Churches have carried their Opinions farther than what their Church has ever, by any public Act, decreed or determined. If we suppose the Case to be the same amongst ourselves, as perhaps it may; yet *a Man that receives and embraces whatever our Church has, by any authentic Act or Decree, establish'd or determined, may be, and is a true Church-man* (that is to say, a true Christian, and one who truly embraces the Communion of the establish'd Church) *altho' in such other Things, as I have but now mention'd, he should happen to be of a different Judgment from the private Opinion of never so many of our greatest Divines.*

Secondly, Whereas it is allow'd, on all sides, that our Rites and Ceremonies, and some other Things, by our Ecclesiastical Laws enacted, are in their own Nature indifferent, and but of human Institution, ordain'd and appointed for the sake of Decency and Order, and the avoiding of Confusion and Irregularity. *He that conscientiously conforms to whatever of that Na-*

true is establish'd amongst us (as being lawful in itself, and appointed by lawful Authority) *is yet a true Church-man, altho' he may be of Opinion that several of these same [indifferent] Things may be altered for the better ; and accordingly endeavours, in a peaceable, modest and christian way, to get them so altered by the same Authority that at first establish'd them.* And though in this his Opinion he should be mistaken ; yet is he nevertheless a *true Church-man* : It being no part of the Character of such a Man to be free from all manner of Error. But except it appears very clearly to him that the Thing is really so *indifferent*, he will neither attempt, nor so much as give his Consent that any Alteration should be made in it. For tho' his Charity is such, that he will not *condemn* any Church or single Person, but where he has *clearly and plainly* the Law of God of his side, yet where he finds any thing to be *settled* ; and but even probable Arguments to induce him to think that it may be of Divine or Apostolic Institution ; he is sure it is the safest way to let it stand as it is : And whatever Alterations he endeavours or consents to, it is always with a Design to promote Piety, Peace and Unity among Christians, and neither to raise any unnecessary Controversy in the Church, nor so much as *seemingly*

to encroach upon the Authority of *Christ* or his Apostles. And farther, before he will consent to any Alteration, even in such Things as are undoubtedly indifferent, he carefully weighs the probable Consequences of such an Attempt, and considers, *First*, That if we have not before-hand a reasonable Assurance of some Good that will follow from it, it ought to be let alone; because possibly it may produce some Evil, tho' every Man cannot easily foresee it. *Secondly*, That the Good which is aimed at by promoting such an Alteration in our Church (that is to say, an Union with the *Dissenters*) can with no Assurance be expected from it, except some reasonable Number of those who dissent from us, do beforehand positively and particularly declare, that they will be satisfied, and join in Communion with us upon the making of it: And *Thirdly*, that as well-meaning Dissenters, through Mistake or Weakness, do take Offence at our innocent and decent Ceremonies; so on the other Side there may, possibly, among ourselves be many of the like Complexion, who would be equally offended at the Alteration of some of them: And to run the Hazard of a Disturbance within ourselves; and, it may be, the Loss of many of our own Members, while we are not sure of gaining as

many others over to us as may counterbalance this Danger, is what a *true Churchman* will by no means consent to. And therefore upon the whole he concludes, That *all manner of Alterations in the Church*, as well as in the State, *ought to be cautiously and thoroughly consider'd, both in themselves and their Consequences, before they are made or attempted.*

Thirdly, *A Man may be a true Churchman* (according to the Definition laid down) *altho' he consents and desires that a Toleration may be granted to those that are of a different Persuasion from him in Matters of Religion.* For, altho' he, for his part, is abundantly convinced that he cannot be in a surer and safer Way to eternal Salvation, than in the Communion of the establish'd Church; yet to compel others (who are not under the like Conviction) by any Penalties to be inflicted either on their Bodies or Goods, to profess or practise what they solemnly declare to be against their Conscience, he judges to be neither reasonable nor agreeable to the Rules of the Gospel. But then, as he is a faithful Subject of the *Civil State*, as well as a sincere Member of the *establish'd Church*, he never can *willingly* yield to such a Toleration as may endanger the Ruin or Downfall of the one or other: And therefore, altho' no Man can be hindred from thinking whatever he pleases; nor

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ought any one to be compelled to profess a Religion, or to worship God any way that he is persuaded is unlawful; yet our *Church-man* does not think it reasonable that all Men that please should be allowed to gather Congregations, and there to teach and preach whatever Doctrine they shall think fit. For this would be not only a *Toleration*, but even an *Invitation* and Encouragement to every Man that were ingenious, and not sufficiently awed by Conscience, if he could not be employed or preferred to his Mind in the Church, to set up for himself; and not only to endeavour to gain such a Number of Disciples as may support and maintain him, but also to strengthen himself and his Party, by sowing Division and Distraction among those from whom he has divided: Which however, at first, it may seem only to threaten the *Church*, yet will soon be found (as dear-bought Experience assures us) to have a very evil Influence upon the State also. Neither does he judge it fit that any Toleration should *willingly* be granted, and much less Encouragement given to those whose Principles or Practices do shew that they would not tolerate the established Church, if the Power were in their Hands; except they first do renounce and disown such Principles and Practices. For if it be
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in my Power to keep a Man's Hands tied and his Tongue quiet, I ought not, in common Prudence, to let loose the one or the other, until I am sufficiently assured that he will not make use of them, upon the first Opportunity, to my Ruin and Destruction. And therefore much less will a *true Church-man* give his Consent that any Part of the civil or military Power should be put into the Hands of such Men, whose Interest, Inclination or Conscience can hardly be supposed to allow them to be impartial to the established Church in the Administration of it. For (whatever Necessity may sometimes compel them to) he believes there never was any Kingdom or Commonwealth (who were true to their Profession) that at any time have *made it their Choice* to put into Places of considerable Trust or Power, any such Persons as have professed to believe the establish'd Religion or Worship to be unlawful, and consequently must think themselves in Conscience obliged to endeavour what they can the Alteration of it.

But there are two Things yet, concerning which, I remember, you desired particularly to know the *naked and undisguised Thoughts* of a *true Church-man*: The first is the *late Revolution*, with the Consequences thereof, namely King *William's* Accession

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cession to the Throne, and her present Majesty's to the Crown of these her Kingdoms. But because a few Men, who once were Members of the establish'd Church, but now have separated themselves from her, do disapprove of the *late Revolution*, and refuse to swear Allegiance to the present Government; therefore to suspect even those who have been constant and firm to the Interest both of King *William* and her present Majesty, always pray'd for them, as their Sovereigns in their publick Worship, and have sworn Allegiance and Fidelity to them, in Opposition to all Competitors or Pretenders whatsoever: To suspect, I say, such Persons as these, as if they were not well affected to the Queen or her Title; if some very good Ground be not produced for such a Suspicion, I think is very highly uncharitable. It is possible that Men who are very different in their *Hypothesis* concerning the Ground and Original of Civil Power, may yet, in their *Practice*, agree in being very faithful and loyal to that particular Government under which they at one time live: And therefore as long as you cannot tax a Man with any thing that is *disloyal*, either in his Words or Actions, you ought not, by any Means, to endeavour to bring him under such a Suspicion; because in point of *Speculation*

lation, he perhaps proceeds upon a different Scheme of Principles from that which you have laid down to yourself. However, to give you all the Satisfaction I can in this Matter, I here present you with the *naked and undisguised Thoughts* both of my self and other *true Church-men*, as far as I am acquainted with them, touching this whole Matter, which are as follows.

First, That *the late King James*, by refusing to govern his Subjects according to the fundamental Laws and Constitutions of the Realm (to which legal Government only his People were obliged to submit) and by assuming to himself an illegal and arbitrary Power (which was in effect the setting up of a new Kingdom or Government, to which his Subjects were no way bound to yield or give Obedience.) And lastly, By withdrawing himself from the Kingdom, rather than yield that those Laws and Constitutions which he had infringed, should again be restored to their due Force; *did really*, and in the strictest Propriety of Sense, *abdicate the Government* (that is to say, that Government with which alone he was legally invested) and consequently, *did leave the Throne vacant*; as was voted by the Commons, and agreed to by the Lords in Convention assembled in *January and February 1688-9*.

Secondly,

Secondly, That by the fundamental Law of Self-preservation (which must always take place in such Cases, where the Laws of the Land have not made sufficient Provision for the publick Safety) *the People of England had a Right to fill the vacant Throne, and to put the abdicated Government into such Hands as might be most for the common Safety.* For, for them to have remained in the same Condition that K. James left them in, until he had return'd again to them at the Head of an Army, had been evidently to give Way to their own Ruin and Destruction; which sure they were not obliged to do: Nor was it possible for so great a Body of Men, even for a small Time, to subsist with any Security to themselves, without some Established Government, as well to rule them within themselves, as to protect them from their Enemies abroad.

Thirdly, As it is morally impossible for so great a Number of Men, as the People of *England* then were, to transact any Business jointly in their own proper Persons; so, by the fundamental Constitution of the Kingdom, the Houses of Lords and Commons, when met together, were the only legal Representatives of the whole Body of the Nation, in the Circumstances they then were; the King having withdrawn

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himself, and refused to exert his legal Power amongst them : And therefore whatsoever a Majority of both Houses did agree to, was to be construed and esteemed as the Act of the whole People ; especially, if afterwards it was acquiesced in, and thereby consented to, by the Generality of the Nation itself. Since then the Lords and Commons so met, did, upon King *James's* Abdication, place our late Sovereign King *William* on the Throne, and the Generality of the People did acquiesce in his Government ; it follows that *King William thereby became our rightful and lawful King* ; and consequently that *our present gracious Sovereign Queen Anne* (who legally succeeds him) *is our rightful and lawful Queen.*

Fourthly and Lastly, Since the Supreme Legislative Power in every Kingdom and Commonwealth, has no Authority over it, whereby it may be controlled, but that of God and his Laws ; and the particular Form of Government, or Rule of Succession, in any civil State, is not settled or determined by any Law of God's making ; it undeniably follows, that in every Kingdom, the Supreme Legislative Power may limit the Succession to the Crown or Sovereignty, within themselves, according as shall be found most advisable for the good of the Community. From whence the
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Consequence is, That *in all Ages to come, whosoever is, or shall be King or Queen of these Realms, BY LAW, is to be own'd and look'd upon as rightful and lawful King or Queen of the same.*

The other thing, concerning which you desired to know the naked and undisguised Thoughts of a *true Church-man*, was the *Necessity of Episcopal Government* in the Christian Church ; together with the Consequences of that Doctrine, as well with respect to the Foreign Churches Abroad, as to our Dissenters at Home ; whose Ecclesiastical Polity is framed after a different Model : In answer whereunto, I here freely give you my Judgment, as far as is necessary for the present Purpose.

First, then, *it is*, I think, allowed, by all who soberly profess Christianity, to be *of divine Appointment, that the Christian Religion should publicly be taught and preached*, (not as a Philosophical Doctrine, which any Man of Learning may teach in a School, but authoritatively proposed to the Consciences of the People, as a Law revealed and given by God) *Baptism and the Lord's Supper be administred, and Discipline* (for the punishing of Offenders with Ecclesiastical Censures, and excluding such as are obstinate from the Communion of the Faithful) *duly exercised.* [See the *Postscript*,

script, and compare it with what follows.]

Secondly, Where any Work is by *divine Appointment* to be performed, the Persons, who perform the Work, must, *ordinarily and regularly*, derive their Power for so doing from God himself. For, who but he, that has Authority to appoint the Work to be done, can give a sufficient Power to any one to take it in Hand? *Ordinarily and regularly*, I say; for, as for Cases of extraordinary Necessity, how far, in them, a Man may presume upon God's *Approbation* of an Action, for the doing of which he has not, in a regular Way, received any Power, is a Point that does not come under our present Consideration. In the *ordinary and regular Method* therefore of Things, *Whosoever takes upon him to be a public Teacher or Preacher of the Gospel, to administer Baptism or the Lord's Supper, or to exercise Ecclesiastical Discipline in the Church of Christ, must originally derive his Power for so doing from none other but God himself.*

Thirdly, That the Power of performing all these Offices was, at the first Foundation of the Christian Church, given by our blessed Saviour to the Twelve Apostles, by them to be communicated to other proper Persons, is what I am sure you will not deny: From whence it will follow, That

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in whatsoever Frame or Method the Apostles did settle the Polity of the Church, in Order to the constant and continual Performance of all the said Offices, the same ought to be preserved intire (as far as possibly can be) in all succeeding Ages. Or in other Terms ; however lawful and necessary it may be, to regulate the undetermined Circumstances even of a divine Institution, according to the Rules of Prudence, and the present Exigence of Things ; yet, wherever it appears that any thing has been establish'd by the Apostles themselves, (who are allowed to have had their Mission and Commission immediately from Christ ;) no manner of Change, by any human Authority, ought ever to be made in any Substantial Part of such an Establishment : Whatever in Cases of extraordinary Necessity (of which I am not now speaking) may perhaps sometimes innocently be submitted to, or complied with.

Fourthly, (To speak in the Words of the learned Mr. Chillingworth) If we abstract from Episcopal Government all Accidentals, and consider only what is Essential and Necessary to it ; we shall find in it no more but this : An Appointment of one Man of eminent Sanctity and Sufficiency, to have the Care of all the Churches within a certain Precinct or Diocese, and furnishing him with

Authority (not absolute or arbitrary, but regulated and bounded by Laws, and moderated by joining to him a convenient number of Assistants) to the intent that all the Churches under him may be provided of good and able Pastors: And that, both of Pastors and People, Conformity to Laws, and Performance of their Duties may be required, under Penalties, not left to Discretion, but by Law appointed. Apost. Instit. of Episc. Demonstr. Sect. 2.

Fifthly, *That this Government was received universally in the Church, either in the Apostles Time, or presently after, is so evident and unquestionable, that the most learned Adversaries of this Government do themselves confess it.* As you may find by the Testimonies quoted, *ibid. Sect. 3.*

From whence, *Sixthly*, I cannot but conclude with the same learned Author, *Sect. 6.* *That seeing Episcopal Government is confessedly so Antient and so Catholic, it cannot with Reason be denied to be Apostolic.* No possible Account being to be given, how a Change from that Frame of Church-Polity, which the Apostles had laid, should immediately after their Time (if not while some of them were alive) come to be universally received throughout the Christian World: And that not only without the least Opposition, but even any manner of Notice

Notice taken, by any Writer, of that Time or since, that any such Change there was. As he most convincingly argues in the remaining Part of that short Discourse, which I earnestly recommend to your reading.

The design'd Brevity of this Letter will not permit me more largely to insist on this Point: Only this I will add, that if we allow the *universal Practice* of the Primitive Church to be a good Comment upon those Passages of holy Scripture that relate to this Matter; no impartial Man, I think, can deny that *Episcopal Government* (as I have but now stated it in the Words of Mr. *Chillingworth*) is of *Apostolick Institution*: Which if once we grant, it will follow, *lastly*, from the Third Proposition that I have laid down, That *it ought to be preserved intire in the Church in all the Ages of it.*

And thus I have freely given you my Thoughts, (and I believe they are much the same in every *true Church-man*) touching the *Necessity of Episcopal Government* in the Church. I come now to the Consequences of this Doctrine of which you desire to be informed. And, in my Opinion, a true Church-man, from what has been said concerning the Necessity of Episcopacy, in
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Conjunction with his other Principles, will draw these following Inferences.

First, That wherever Episcopal Government is settled and established, it ought by no means to be abolished. If any Bishop do assume more Power to himself than what justly belongs to him, he may and ought to be restrained by proper Authority : But wholly to abolish an Order or Office so early settled and universally received throughout the Christian Church, a true Church-man cannot but look upon as a dangerous Encroachment upon the Authority of the Apostles, or rather of Christ himself from whom they received their Commission.

Secondly, Where Episcopacy, as above stated, is the Government of an established Church, against whose Communion no just or sufficient Objection can be made ; all Christians ought to own the Communion of that Church as lawful ; and they who live within the Precincts, where she is so established, are bound in Conscience to join in Communion with her. And that notwithstanding that in their Opinion she may labour under some Defects. For where a Church is establish'd in which we may fully enjoy all the Ordinances of God that are necessary to Salvation, and are compelled to do nothing that is contrary to the Law of God ; no supposed

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Thirdly, If two Societies of Christians, in any Place or Country, do enjoy the Freedom of their Religion ; both in all other Respects equally Orthodox ; but the Government of the one being Episcopal, and the other not so : *A true Church-man will think himself obliged to hold Communion with such an Episcopal Church wherever he finds it*, rather than with those who have rejected that Apostolick Form of Government. Nor is it to him material, in this Case, to say that the *Non-Episcopal Church* is established by Law, and the *Episcopal* only tolerated or connived at. For wherever he has the Opportunity of enjoying any Ordinance of God, he thinks that no human Law ought to debar him from it : And whatever he finds or judges to have been appointed by the Apostles throughout the universal Church ; and that in pursuance of that very Command and Commission which they had receiv'd for the Preaching of the Gospel, and the Performance of those other Things which confessedly are of divine Institution, and ordinarily necessary to Salvation (which he takes to be plainly the Case of Episcopacy) he looks upon as the Ordinance of God himself. But if this same Episcopal Church shall wilfully

wilfully neglect to pray for that civil Government, which by the Providence of God, and the Laws of the Place, is justly set over them; he will openly protest against this Defect in their Worship; it being beyond all Dispute and Apostolick Constitution, *that Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions and giving of Thanks should be made*———*For Kings and for all that are in Authority,* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

Fourthly, Wherever Episcopacy has been abolish'd or laid aside; *A true Church-man thinks it the Duty of every Man who professes Christianity to do what, in his Station, he fairly can for the Re-establishment of it:* And that because he takes it to be a divine Ordinance. But how far the Necessities, or invincible Prejudices of any of the foreign reform'd Churches, will excuse them before God, either for the laying aside or not restoring of the Episcopal Office, he will not take upon him to judge; altho' in such Cases as these, his Charity will always incline him to the most favourable Opinion.

But Fifthly, If, by the Providence of God, a *true Church-man* should be under a Necessity of living in a Place, where he cannot have the Benefit of communicating with an Episcopal Church; *There is no Principle, that I have here ascribed to him,*
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that will lay him under a necessity of absolutely refusing the Communion of a Church, that wants nothing but Episcopacy to render it truly agreeable to the Apostolick Model.

Wherever he finds a Defect in a Church, he thinks it his Duty to endeavour what in his Station he can, the supplying of it: But it is not every *real Defect* in a Church that can lay a private Christian under an Obligation of renouncing, or absolutely refusing her Communion. Every Man is certainly bound to serve God, both privately and publickly, as near as he can according to what God himself has prescribed: But if Things (where I am) are not ordered, in all Respects, exactly according to this Rule; and it be no way in my Power to remedy it; I think I ought to serve God as well as I can, if I cannot do it as well as I would. What God has *forbid* I must not do; but if it be not in my Power to do every Thing according as he has *commanded*; I doubt not but he will accept me, if I do the best that in my Circumstances I can.

I am,

Octob. 20,
1708.

Sir, Yours, &c.

P O S T.

POSTSCRIPT.

BEcause (upon a careful Recollection of our late Discourse) I cannot but remember, that you dropp'd some Expressions that seem'd to have a Tincture not only of *Antiepiscopal* but even *Antiministerial* Principles; although I have already exceeded the Bounds of a Letter; yet I shall beg the Favour of you a little, with me, to review what I have but just now said touching the *Necessity of Episcopacy*.

And when you look back upon the three first Propositions which I have there laid down, I pray consult the *New Testament*, and consider those Places, where not only a Command is given for the Performance of the several Parts of the Ministerial Function; but also *certain Persons* appointed for the Discharge of that Office; and that either with plain Direction, or a very sufficient Intimation that they should take care to appoint others who should go on with the same Work, when they themselves should be gone off the Stage of this World: For Example,

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Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. It was to the *Eleven Disciples*, ver. 16. that our Saviour said, *Go teach all Nations baptizing them—And lo I am with you alway* (that is, with you and your Successors in this Office) *even to the End of the World.*

John xx. 21. To the same Persons (only *Thomas* being absent, ver. 24.) it was that he said, *As my Father hath sent me, so send I you, &c.* Which plainly implies a Power of sending others where they could not go themselves, or when they should be about to leave the World.

And that the Apostles understood this Power to be thus given them in order to be continued to succeeding Generations, is so plain from their Practice that nothing can be more. *For this Cause left I thee in Crete,* (says St. Paul to Titus, chap. i. ver. 5:) *that thou shouldest set in Order the Things that are wanting; and ordain Elders in every City.* Again 2 Tim. ii. 2. *The Things that thou hast heard of me—the same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also.* And if any Man's bare personal Qualifications, without any other Mission, were a sufficient Warrant for him to take upon himself the Office of a Minister of the Gospel; what could St. Paul mean when he puts the Question, as of a thing beyond all manner of doubt, *Rom. x. 15.*

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How shall they preach except they be sent ?

As to the Fourth Proposition ; I wave all Dispute about the NAME of *Bishop* and *Presbyter* ; or by what other Tittle they were or might be distinguished. But that the OFFICE, there discribed by Mr. *Chil-lingworth*, was not only exercis'd by the Apostles themselves, (which I think no Man denies,) but also by other Persons particularly appointed by them for that Purpose, is beyond Contradiction evident from the Instances of *Timothy* and *Titus*, and the Epistles to them written : Nor is it by any Means a sufficient Reply, to say, that *Timothy* and *Titus* were, in an extraordinary Manner, appointed by St. *Paul* to finish that Work of settling and establishing the Churches of *Ephesus* and *Crete*, which he, being called away to other Places, could not stay to make an End of ; and were not in that Capacity, *Ordinary Officers* to be always continued in the Christian Church : For, besides that this is spoken without any manner of Proof, and is contrary to the unquestioned Opinion of the Christian Church for above Fifteen Hundred Years after *Christ*, * I desire you to tell me : Did
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* *Timothy is called the First Bishop of Ephesus, and Titus of Crete, in those Inscriptions which are placed at the End of the Epistles, written by St. Paul*

all those Persons, who in the several Parts of the Church, had upon the like Occasions received the same Power from some of the Apostles, as *Timoty* and *Titus* had done from *St. Paul*. Did they, I say, all lose this Power as soon as the Apostles that employed them were dead; as the Death of any Prince or Potentate makes void the Commission of his Substitute or Ambassador? If they did, then it will follow, that when the Churches dispersed throughout the World had most Occasion for the Exercise of this Power (*viz.* when, by the Death of the Apostles, they were deprived of their personal Care and Inspection) they could not have the Benefit of it; which seems absurd to imagine. But if the Power of *Timothy* and *Titus* (as it is described in the Epistles to them) did remain the same in them, and others such as they were, after that the Apostles were departed out of this World; then the Office of a Bishop, as above described, was of Apostolick Institution: Nor do I think it of any Mo-

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to them: Which Inscription, though not of Canonical Authority, I take to be of Credit sufficient to shew the Notion that the Antient Church had of their Office in those Places. Nor is it denied that Eusebius styles them Bishops of those Places, in the same Sense that we now understand the Word Bishop. H. l. Eccl. l. 3. c. 4.

ment to contend about the Name or Title given to them.

As to the Fifth Proposition : If we duly consider that the Office of superintending and governing the Churches, every where at first planted, was *chiefly* exercised by the Apostles themselves who planted them ; as appears from the Example of *St. Paul* ; who had the *Care of all the Churches* (that is, all of his planting) upon him, *2 Cor. xi. 28. visited every City where he had preached the Word of the Lord, Acts xv. 36.* And though *absent*, yet could and did give *Judgment* in Cases that required the Discipline of the Church, *1 Cor. v. 3.* If this, I say, be duly considered ; and also that the holy Scripture is silent as to what was done by almost all the rest of the Apostles, beyond *Jerusalem and Judea*, in the Propagation of the Gospel ; it is not to be wondered that we meet with so little in the *New Testament* touching any others who acted in the Capacity of *Bishops* (as we now understand that Word) as long as the Apostles remained alive. But as the Instances of *Timothy* and *Titus* do sufficiently prove that some such Bishops, as we contend for, were appointed, as Occasion required, even in the Days of the Apostles themselves ; so is it freely owned by the greatest Champions for Presbytery that *immediately* after their Time,

his

his Form of Government universally obtained throughout the whole Christian Church. And that you may not think yourself imposed upon by this Assertion, I shall here transcribe the Quotations that Mr. *Chillingworth* has set down, and add a few others for your farther Satisfaction.

Peter Molinaeus in his Book *De Munere Pastoralis*, purposely written in Defence of the Presbyterian Government, acknowledgeth, *That presently after the Apostles Time; or even in their Time (as Ecclesiastical Story witnesseth) it was ordained, that in every City one of the Presbytery should be called a Bishop; who should have Pre-eminence over his Colleagues; to avoid Confusion, which oft-times ariseth out of Equality; And truly this Form of Government all Churches every where received.*

Theodorus Beza, in his Tract *De triplici Episcopatus genere*, confesseth in effect the same Thing. For, having distinguished Episcopacy into three Kinds, *Divine, Human* and *Satanical*; and attributing to the Second (which he calls *Human*, but we maintain and conceive to be Apostolical) not only a Priority of Order, but a Superiority of Power and Authority over other Presbyters, bounded yet by Laws and Canons provided against Tyranny; he clearly professeth that of this kind of Episcopacy,

is to be understood whatsoever we read concerning the Authority of Bishops (or Presidents, as *Justin Martyr* calls them) in *Ignatius* and other more antient Writers.

Thus far out of Mr. *Cbillingworth*, whose Quotations indeed, having not the Books at hand, I have not examined, but yet have no doubt of the Exactness of them; not only on the Score of his great Ability and Sincerity, but also because I never could find that he has herein in the least been contradicted.

In the Margin of the same Discourse I find quoted *Dan. Chamier Panstrat.* Tom. 2. Lib. 10. Cap. 6. Sect. 24. His Words are *Inæqualitatem* (sc. inter *Episcopos & Presbyteros*) *esse vetustissimam, ac vicinam Apostolorum temporibus; Quod nos ultro fate-mur.* He calls this Inequality there indeed an *Innovation*: But yet owns that in *Alexandria*, which was the last Church where in it took place, it was introduced *aut nondum elapso, aut vix elapso primo seculo.*

I find there also quoted *Nic. Vedelius*, *Exerc. 3. in Epist. Ignat. ad Philadelph. cap. 14. & Exerc. 8. in Epist. ad Mariam. cap. 3.* but have not the Book by me. But the former of these Quotations I find in *Vedelius's* Words set down by *Forbesius Irenic. lib. 2. cap. 11. Jam, inquit, tempore Ignatii erat discrimen illud Presbyterorum & Episcopi.*
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Hieronymus Zanchius (quoted also by *Forbesius*) saith thus, *Non ita multo post Apostolos, obtinuit consuetudo, ut ex multis pastoribus, seu Presbyteris & Episcopis, unus præficeretur reliquis omnibus, non tanquam Dominus, sed ut Rector reliquis Senatoribus; cui imprimis commendata esset cura totius alicujus Ecclesia; reliqui illius essent Coadjutores & Collegæ*——*Ac proinde huic etiam primarii καὶ ἐξουσίαν nomen Episcopi & Pastoris attribuebatur: Reliqui Collegæ Presbyterorum tantum nomine contenti fuerunt. Ita factum erit ut quæque Civitas unum haberet Episcopum & multos Presbyteros, &c.* In Quart. Præcept. Pag. (*Forbesio*) 732, 733. (*Mibi*) 666, 667.

Augustinus Marloratus, by the *Angels of the Seven Churches*, Rev. i. 20. understands with the Generality of Interpreters, the Bishops or Pastors of those Churches. And that you may clearly see what Notion he had of those Bishops which were appointed in that early Age of the Church, take his own Words (*Exposit. Ecclesiast. in Apoc. cap. 2. v. 1.*) *Non Populum aggreditur sed Clerum; nec quemlibet de Clero nominatim compellet, sed Principem Cleri, utique Episcopum.* This he speaks without any Doubt or Hesitation; and his Testimony is so much the more to be regarded, because he was well acquainted with, and a diligent Collector

Collector of the Opinions of the learned Divines of those foreign reformed Churches where the Presbyterian Government was establish'd.

Monsieur Bochart is indeed of Opinion, that the Government of the Church, at first, was according to the Presbyterian Model: Into which Mistake it is probable he was led by finding Presbyters settled in several Churches, before there was any fixed or resident Bishop amongst them: The Office of superintending and governing the Churches every where being, as I have already said, for some time exercised by the several Apostles that planted them. But yet observe the free Acknowledgment of this learned Man in his own Words, *Cependant je demeure d'accord que l'Ordre Episcopal est de grande Antiquite, & qu'il a este receu avec beaucoup de fruit par toute l'Eglise, bientot apres les Apostres*, Lettre a Monsieur Morley, p. 4.

Were it necessary in so plain a Case, I could add many more Quotations to the same Purpose. But I conclude this Point with one out of *David Blondel*, who was the greatest Champion that ever yet appeared against Episcopacy. He then (*Præf. ad Apol. pro Sentent. Hieron*) describes the Place and Office of the Senior Presbyter in every Church to have been much the same

same as I have said Mr. *Chillingworth* as-
 cribes to a Bishop, calling them *Presbyte-*
rorum Præpositos, ἐξάρχουσ, *Cleri totius capi-*
ta, ἀπολόκλητοι, who had the first, or chief
Care of each Church, by the Consent of their
Fellow Presbyters ; and telling us, that the
well or ill doing of the Flock committed to
them, might justly be charged upon them. As
 he says it appears by the Messages sent to
 the *Angels of the Asiatick Churches*, Rev.
 ii. 3. And having in these and other
 Words described them as Persons of a re-
 markable Eminence above the rest of the
 Presbyters, he tells us (on what solid
 Ground I cannot find) that this Office of
 course belonged to the eldest Presbyter in
 every Church, upon whose Death he says
 it was, by Succession, derived to the next
 in Seniority, and so continued until the Year
 of our Lord 108. (for the Case of *Timothy*
 and *Titus* he looks upon to be extraordi-
 nary) After which he has these remarkable
 Words: *Sed paulo post — ad Suffragia*
ubique (velut conspiratione facto) itum, ut
deinceps fratrum caput & ἀρχὴν ἔσθαι non
(pro veteri more) ἀπολόκλητον, sed (ex re-
centi instituto, inter collegas dotibus ad com-
munem edificationem potior, &c. Pag. 6, 7, 8.
 So that *Blondel* himself, a profess'd Adver-
 sary, grants the Office of a Bishop to have
 been from the very first Establishment of
 Churches ;

Churches ; but only alledges (how truly I do not now enquire) that this Office at first went by Succession ; and that soon after the Year 108, it came every where to be elective. And to make this Scheme of his out, he is forced to have Recourse to a very extravagant Supposition ; namely, that the Churches every where, on a sudden, *as if they had conspired together*, made a Change in the Manner of appointing their Bishops or Presidents, and brought it from Succession to Election ; although it is very evident that so material a Change in a Thing of that Consequence could not be introduced without great Opposition, which therefore must have made it a Business of longer time than he supposes.

The sixth and last Proposition which I have laid down, touching the *Necessity of Episcopacy*, is so plain an Inference from what went before, that I think it cannot be gainsaid. For that the Form of Church-Polity, settled by the Apostles, should, immediately after their Decease, be universally changed, and that without any Opposition given, or so much as Notice taken by any Writer of that Age, or near it, that such a Change there was, is a Supposition that sure no Man that considers thoroughly will ever admit.

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most learned Adversaries of Episcopacy, our *Church-man* gathers enough to conclude, with the established Church, that *Bishops*, as well as *Priests*, or Presbyters and *Deacons*, have been even from the *Apostles Time*. Preface to the Form of Ordination.

I pray observe, that St. *John* lived to the Year of *Christ*, 99 ; or, as some say, two or three Years longer. Now if the Church, during his Life, had innovated in the Matter of Episcopacy, he certainly would have given publick Opposition to it: And how so great a Change as is pretended could *universally*, and *without Opposition*, be introduced within eleven or twelve Years after his Death, is, to me, a Riddle not to be accounted for.

F I N I S.

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A N
ABSTRACT
 OF THE
Church Catechism ;

Briefly Containing

The SUBSTANCE of all that is
 Necessary to SALVATION.

Tit. iii. 8, 9.

This is a faithful saying, And these Things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good Works : These Things are good and profitable unto Men. But avoid foolish Questions. —

By the most Reverend Dr. EDWARD
 SYNGE, late Lord Archbishop of
 TUAM, in Ireland.

L O N D O N :

Printed for Thomas Trye near Grays-Inn-Gate
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P R E F A C E.



THE Necessary Information of a Christian in Matters of Religion, is all reducible to the following Heads.

First, What he ought to believe?

Secondly, What Duties he is bound to perform?

Thirdly, After what Manner he ought to address himself to God in Prayer?

Fourthly, By what Means and under what Conditions he is admitted into the Church of Christ?

Fifthly, How and by what Means he is to apply the Sufferings of Christ to himself, so as to partake of the Benefits of them?

Whosoever is well instructed in these Five Points, and lives conformably to such Instruction, is undoubtedly in the direct and sure Way to eternal Salvation.

It were much to be wished that every Man, Woman and Child amongst us could distinctly repeat the Words of our excellent Church Catechism: But he who cannot do this, may yet understand them: And if he does that well and thoroughly, there is no part of the abovementioned Instruction, which will be wanting to him. For the Creed with the short Explication in the Catechism subjoined to it will teach him what he is to Believe. The Ten Commandments with the like Explication will instruct him in all Parts of his Duty: From the Lords Prayer in like Manner explained he may learn how to Pray: And from the Doctrine there delivered, concerning Baptism and the Lords-Supper, he may be well informed of the Terms upon which we come into Christ's Church; and in what Manner we become Partakers of the Benefits of that Sacrifice which he made of Himself upon the Cross for our Redemption. All these Things, I say, may sufficiently be known, in order to Salvation, by every one who well and thoroughly understands the Church Catechism, tho' possibly he may not be able to repeat the Words of it. I have by Experience found, that they who cannot read, and some of those who can, are very hardly to be brought to get by heart, or even to understand some Parts of the Catechism; particularly

particularly those where a single Answer is drawn out into some Length; as the second and fourth Commandments, the Explication both of the Commandments and the Lords Prayer, and the Doctrine of the Sacraments.

For the Ease of their Memories, therefore, as well as improvement of their Understanding, I have in the following Abstract endeavour'd to represent the true Sense of the Catechism, in the easiest and plainest Words I could think of, and have made the Answers therein as few and short also, as I could contrive them.

And since Religious Instruction consists not in the repeating a Form of Words, but altogether in the Knowledge of necessary Things; I think I may truly say, That whosoever well understands this Abstract, is in a good Measure instructed in the Church Catechism, and in all Things that are necessary to Salvation. And whatever Form of Words is made use of in Catechising; it will always be necessary for the Catechist (when he instructs the Ignorant) a little to explain each Question and Answer, as also to prove the Contents of every Answer from the Holy Scriptures. Part of which Explication and Proof it will be, sometimes to recite the Words of each of the Ten Commandments, as he puts the Question upon them; and to shew that the short Explication here given of them is altogether

ther agreeable to their respective Design and Intention, which always reaches farther than the Letter.

The main Substance of the Christian Religion is here contained in forty two short Answers, none of them difficult to be understood (at least with a little Explication) even by the meanest Capacity.

How easy then will it be for the most ignorant Man or even Child, who will but be attentive, by the Assistance of his Parish Minister, or any other prudent and well instructed Christian, in a few Days to learn all that God requires from him in order to his everlasting Happiness? And when such Persons arrive at more Understanding, it will be their Duty as they become capable, not only to learn the Church Catechism, but also to be well acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and other Books of Piety and Religion.



A N

A B S T R A C T, &c.

1.  *HAT Benefit was it to you that you were baptized?*

Answer. Great Benefit: For, by God's Blessing on his own Ordinance of *Baptism*, I was thereby made a Member of the Church of Christ, a Child of God, and an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. *What must you do that you may not be deprived of these great Benefits and Advantages?*

Ans. I must renounce the Devil, and all Manner of Sin and Wickedness: I must believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith: And I must give Obedience to all God's Commandments through the whole course of my Life.

3. *Re-*

3. *Rehearse the Articles of the Christian Faith?*

I Believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into Hell; the third Day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right Hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the Quick and the Dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholick Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of Sins; The Resurrection of the Body, And the Life everlasting. Amen.

4. *What dost thou hereby chiefly and principally learn to believe.*

Ans. I learn to believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, in whose Name I was baptized.

5. *What do you believe of God the Father?*

Ans. That by his Almighty Power he made me and all the World.

6. *What do you believe of God the Son?*

Ans. That he took our Nature upon him, died for the Sins of all Mankind, rose again, and ascended into Glory.

7. *What*

7. *What do you believe of God the Holy Ghost ?*

Ans. That by his Grace and Assistance all faithful Members of Christ's Church are enabled to lead holy Lives.

8. *What do you believe of Christ's Church ?*

Ans. That it is an universal Church, and not confined to any one Nation or People. That every true Member of this Church is holy. That they all ought to maintain Communion and Fellowship together in Christ Jesus. And that so doing they shall obtain Forgiveness of their Sins and everlasting Happiness in the Life to come.

9. *How many Commandments has God given us ?*

Ans. Chiefly Ten : Being the same which God himself spake unto the Children of Israel.

10. *What does the First Commandment require from us ?*

Ans. That we should love, fear and honour God above all things ; and give religious Worship to none but himself.

11. *What does the Second Commandment require from us ?*

Ans. That we should make no Picture or Image of God ; nor worship or bow down to any Picture or Image whatsoever.

12. *What*

12. *What does the Third Commandment require from us?*

Ans. That we should honour and reverence the Name of God; and never profane it, either by foolish Talking, vain or false Swearing, or Cursing.

13. *What does the Fourth Commandment require from us?*

Ans. That we should worship God, not only privately, but publicly also: And that one Day in Seven should more especially be set apart for his Worship and Service, which amongst us Christians, is the *Lord's Day*.

14. *What does the Fifth Commandment require from us?*

Ans. That we should love, honour, and obey our Parents, and all our Superiours in Church and State.

15. *What does the Sixth Commandment require from us?*

Ans. That we should abstain from Murder, Hatred, Malice and Revenge, and be kindly affectioned one towards another.

16. *What does the Seventh Commandment require from us?*

Ans. That we should abstain from Adultery, Whoredom, and all manner of Lewdness in Thought, Word, and Deed: And that we should carefully keep our Bodies in Temperance, Sobriety and Chastity.

17. *What*

17. *What does the Eighth Commandment require from us?*

Ans. That we should neither steal, cheat, nor defraud; but honestly give to every Man whatever is due to him.

18. *What does the Ninth Commandment require from us?*

Ans. That we should bear false Witness against no Man, but abstain from Evil Speaking, Lying and Slandring; and be true and sincere in all that we say.

19. *What doth the Tenth Commandment require from us?*

Ans. That we should be content with that which is our own, and not covet what belongs to any other Man.

20. *Give me the main Substance of all God's Commandments, in short?*

Ans. To love God with all our Heart and Soul; and to love our Neighbour as we do our selves.

21. *Are you able of yourself to keep these Commandments?*

Ans. Not without God's Grace and Assistance, which I must continually pray for.

22. *Say the Lords Prayer.*

OUR Father which art in Heaven;
Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom
come. Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is
in

in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them, that Trespas against us. And lead us not into Temptation, But deliver us from Evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

23. *Do you pray for your self alone?*

Ans. I pray for all Mankind together with my self.

24. *What mean you when you say, Our Father which art in Heaven?*

Ans. I give Glory to God, as being our Lord and Heavenly Father.

25. *What mean you when you say, Hallowed be thy Name?*

Ans. I pray that God's Holy Name may be sanctified and revered through the World.

26. *What mean you when you say, Thy Kingdom come?*

Ans. I pray that all Men may become obedient unto God, as their eternal King; and that we all may be partakers of his Heavenly Kingdom.

27. *What mean you when you say, Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven?*

Ans. I pray that we may all be obedient to God's Will here on Earth, as the holy Angels and blessed Spirits are in Heaven.

22. *What*

27. *What mean you when you say Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

Ans. I pray that God would give us the Necessaries of Life, of which *Bread* is reckoned to be the chief.

29. *What mean you when you say Forgive us our Trespases as we forgive them that trespass against us?*

Ans. I pray that as we forgive all other Men who have wronged us, so God would forgive us our Sins, whereby we have offended him.

30. *What mean you when you say Lead us not into Temptation?*

Ans. I pray that God would preserve us from every Thing that may tempt or draw us into Sin.

31. *What mean you when you say Deliver us from Evil?*

Ans. I pray that God would deliver us from all Calamities and Afflictions of this World: But above all, from the Evil of Sin, and the consequent Evil of eternal Damnation.

32. *What mean you when you say Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever?*

Ans. I give Praise and Glory to God for the Greatness of his Power and Majesty.

33. *Why do you say Amen at the End both of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer?*

Ans. *Amen* signifies as much as *verily, truly, or so be it*: And I pronounce it at the End both of my *Creed* and my *Prayers*, to shew that my Heart agrees with my Mouth.

34. *How many divine Ordinances are there, which are commonly called by the Name of Sacraments?*

Ans. Two only, as generally necessary to Salvation; that is to say, *Baptism* and *The Supper of the Lord*.

35. *What is the outward and visible Part of Baptism?*

Ans. Water, wherein Christ has commanded every Man to be baptized, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

36. *What is the inward and invisible part of it?*

Ans. God's Grace and Blessing attending his own Ordinance; whereby we are cleansed from the Pollution of Sin; admitted into the Favour of God, as his Children, and enabled to live in Obedience to him.

37. *What is required from Persons to be baptized?*

Ans. Faith and Repentance.

38. *Why*

38. *Why then are Infants baptized, who are incapable both of believing and repenting?*

Ans. They are bound to believe and repent as soon as they become capable: Of which their Parents and Sureties, who bring them to Baptism are obliged to take all due care.

39. *Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?*

Ans. It was ordained for the continual Remembrance of the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, and of the Benefits which we receive thereby.

40. *What is the outward and visible Part of the Lord's Supper?*

Ans. Bread and Wine; both which Christ has commanded to be received.

41. *What is the inward and invisible Part of it?*

Ans. The Communion or Participation of the Body and Blood of Christ; which through Faith we spiritually receive in the *Lord's Supper*, and thereby are made partakers of the Benefits of his Death and Passion.

42. *What Preparation is required of those who come to The Lord's Supper?*

Ans. True Repentance for all past Sins, with a stedfast Purpose of leading an Holy Life, for the Time to come: Faith in *Jesús Christ*, with a thankful Remembrance of his Death, and Charity towards all Mankind.

THE Ten COMMANDMENTS.

I.

THOU shalt have none other Gods but me.

II.

Thou shalt not make to thy self any graven Image, nor the Likeness of any Thing that is in Heaven above, or in the Earth beneath, or in the Water under the Earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them: For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shew Mercy unto Thousands, of them that love me, and keep my Commandments.

III.

III.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain: For the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain.

IV.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day. Six Days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh Day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no Manner of Work, thou, and thy Son, and, thy Daughter, thy Man-servant, and thy Maid-servant, thy Cattle and the Stranger, that is within thy Gates. For in six Days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh Day; Wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh Day and hallowed it.

V.

Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy Days may be long, in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI.

Thou shalt do no Murder.

VII.

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VII.

Thou shalt not commit Adultery.

VIII.

Thou shalt not steal.

IX.

Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour.

X.

Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's House, thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's Wife, nor his Servant, nor his Maid, nor his Ox, nor his Ass, nor any Thing that is his.

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By the most Reverend Dr. EDWARD SYNGE,
late Lord Archbishop of TUAM, in
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ADVICE, &c.



YOU desire that some Directions may be given you, both for the composing and Delivery of your Sermons.

1. He who sets himself to any Work, ought well to consider for what End and Purpose it is or ought to be designed; that his Labour may not be in vain.

2. The End and Design which every Preacher of the Gospel ought always to propose to himself, cannot be better expressed than in our blessed Saviour's own Words. *Go ye therefore and teach all Nations—teaching them to observe all Things whatever I have commanded you*, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. To which I desire you to add, Tit. ii. 11. &c. And to take Notice of the concluding Words, v. 15. *These Things speak and exhort*, &c. I might add many more pregnant Passages of *Holy Scripture* to the same Purpose: But they cannot escape your own Observation, in your constant and serious

Reading both of the *Old* and *New Testament*. The Business, the only Business of a Preacher ought to be, to influence his Audience to Holiness, in order to their eternal Happiness. Let this then be your first and principal Rule in the making of every Sermon, that it be proper for this End.

3. It is a good Custom, That a Preacher always chooses a Passage of *Holy Scripture*, which is called his *Text*; for the Ground or Foundation of his Sermon. Let it be always your Care to make Choice of such a *Text*, as may easily and naturally lead you into such a Discourse, as may answer the End above-mentioned.

4. Let not the Introduction to your Sermon be very long. It may be proper to give some brief Account of the Context, thereby to shew the Occasion of the Words; or to set forth the present State or practices of Men; that it may appear how seasonable it may be to handle the following Subject, and sometimes it may be best to enter upon the Text without any Preface. Long Introductions are generally tedious to the Audience.

5. Plain Texts (of which there is great plenty) are generally the best. But if there be any Obscurity in the Words, let it briefly

briefly be explained; that the Text may be well understood.

6. For the drawing of useful Matter from the Text, one Way is to deduce one or more Doctrinal Propositions from it: Each of which Propositions may (if there be Occasion) be a little explained, to guard against mistakes; and then proved from *Scripture* or *Reason*, or both.

7. Sometimes it may be proper from it to raise material Questions; the Answer to each of which must consist of one or more distinct Propositions; each Proposition to be a little explained (as Occasion shall be) and then proved from *Scripture* or *Reason*, or both.

8. Or sometimes it may be proper to divide the Text into its Parts; and from each part (almost as if it were a distinct Text) to raise and establish Doctrinal Propositions, to be explained and proved, as is before mentioned; but in a shorter Way.

9. From each Doctrine, thus explained and proved, proper Inferences are to be drawn, either for the confirming of some Point of Faith, or the enforcing of some Rule of Practice. Which Inferences may also be farther explained and proved, as there shall be Occasion.

10. Sometimes it may be best immediately

ately to subjoin each Inference to its respective Doctrine, from whence it is deduced; or sometimes to reserve them all for the Conclusion of your Discourse.

11. The best Conclusion of a Sermon is to leave a strong Impression of some particular Christian Duty upon the Minds of your hearers: To which it may sometimes be very useful to subjoin two or three Prudential Rules for the better putting it in practice.

12. I have given you my clearest thoughts of the Way of composing a Sermon: But be not strict in adhering to this or that particular Method. Always choose a proper subject; and whatever Method occurs to your thoughts, pursue it; provided it be clear. Method is certainly of great Use both to the Preacher and Hearers: But I have heard and read good Sermons that have not been strictly Methodical.

13. Before you sit down to write your Sermon, draw up a short Scheme of all the Heads of it in their proper Order. This will not take up much Time, and will make the Composition very much the easier.

14. The best Sermon will lose much of its Force, if it be not well delivered. Let your Delivery be very distinct, that not one Word may be lost. Some things require

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quire a quicker Pronunciation than others: But nothing should be spoken languidly or negligently from the Pulpit. I can give you no better Rule than this: Speak as one who is in earnest, and desires that all he says may be both understood and believed: But take care to avoid every thing, in your Expressions, pronunciation, and Gesture, that any way looks like Affectation, or Singularity.

15. To make you an useful Preacher, take care to store up good Notions in your Mind, by studying the *Holy Scriptures* and Books of Morality and Practical Divinity. *These things command and teach.*—*Give Attendance to Reading.*—*Neglect not the Gift that is in thee.*—*Meditate upon these Things; give thyself wholly to them.*—*Take heed to thyself, and to thy Doctrine; Continue in them: For in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee,* 1 Tim. iv. 11. &c.

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 LIFE of DANIEL HERLY,
 A
 Poor Irish Peasant.

JAM. ii. 5. *Hearken, my beloved Brethren; hath not God chosen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?*

*E Plebe media sæpe deprehende is,
 Qui Principum non cesserit Prudentiæ.*
 GEO. BUCHAN. Baptist.

— *In panno tenui recondit
 Nuda se virtus, tuguri sub umbra
 Rustici; nec se titulis suberbis
 Vendit; insanosque fori tumultus
 Ridet, & plausus Popularis auræ;
 Nec Cliens magni foribus Patroni
 Affidet: Vitæ tacitos beatæ
 Rure secreto, sibi nota tantum,
 Exigit annos.* Idem.

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THE
EDITOR
TO THE
READER.

I Very well remember to have heard the *Ground-Work* of what is here related from *Daniel Herly* himself; who appeared to me to be a Man of great Honesty, and of a very good Understanding. The *Circumstances* which are added (as in such Cases is usual) to complete the Narrative, are all of them very agreeable.

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greeable to *Daniel's* Character. And I hope the Whole will afford good Instruction, together with some Entertainment, to every one who reads it.

A SIN.

A SINCERE

Christian and Convert,

Exemplified in the

LIFE of *DANIEL HERLY.*

C H A P. I.

*His Parentage, Birth, and Education, to
the Eighteenth Year of his Age.*

DENIS* *HERLY* was a sober industrious Day-labourer. He lived a single Life until he was about Twenty six Years of Age; and made it his constant Custom to lay up a Halfpenny, and sometimes a Penny, every Day, out of the Wages which he earned; by which, and a little good Management, he was able to purchase Two Cows, and Nine or Ten Sheep; the Profit of which paid for their Grasing, and added something to what he was able to save out of his Wages.

*I never happened to know what his Father's Name was; but will crave Leave to call him *Denis*.

He was a *Papist*, and bred up in great *Ignorance*, as such poor People in *Ireland* generally are : But he abhorred Drunkenness, Lying, Cheating, Stealing, and all other Immorality ; to which others of that Sort are too often much given.

It was remarkable in him, that nothing could provoke him to curse or swear (except he were called to take his Oath before a Magistrate ;) and whenever he heard any such wicked Expressions come from the Mouths of any of his Companions, he always soberly rebuked them for it.

Upon Sundays and Holidays he constantly went to Mass (unless he were hindred by Sickness, or some unavoidable Accident) and there behaved himself with as much Devotion as could be expected in an ignorant Man, who understood not one Word of all that was said by the Priest. And when Mass was done, he always spent the remaining Part of *Sunday* quietly at home, or in the Company of some of the soberest of his Neighbours, and of *Holidays* in some honest Labour. And when the Priest once reproved him for working on a *Holiday*, he made Answer that he thought it was much better for him to spend the Remainder of such a Day in doing some Good for himself, or some of his Neighbours, than to waste it in meer Pastime, or at the Alehouse, or in downright Idleness.

Before he married, he took a Lease of as much Land as would graze his few Cattle, and afford him a good Garden, and a small Quantity for Tillage. His Landlord would have obliged him, over and above his Rent, to have given him twenty Days Work every Year. But, says *Denis*, if I oblige my self to leave my own Business, and

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work so many Days for you, whenever you require me (perhaps in bad Weather or in Harvest-time) I may thereby be too great a Loser. And therefore I desire you to set a reasonable Rent upon your Land, which I will endeavour honestly to pay you : But as for *Duty-work*, wherever I go, I resolve never to subject my self to it. The Landlord thought he spoke with Discretion, and came to an Agreement for a certain yearly Rent in Money.

When *Denis* had thus gotten a Place to fix himself upon, he chose a modest, industrious young Woman for his Wife, and, within less than a Year after his Marriage, had a Son born to him, whom he called *Daniel*.

As soon as *Daniel* was four Years of Age, he was sent to an *English* School in the Neighbourhood, and by the Time he came to Seven, could read perfectly well : After which he always took so great a Delight in Reading, that he would leave his Play and all Diversion for it.

Very few of the *Popish* Laity being allowed to read the *Holy Scriptures*, or any Books written by *Protestants*, the Books in which their Children are first trained up at School are commonly such as these : *The Seven Wise Masters*, *The History of Fortunatus*, *Gesta Romanorum*, *Valentine and Orson*, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, with divers others of the like Sort. The romantic Stories, of which these Books are full, made *Daniel*, whilst he was a Child, exceeding fond of them : But when he grew up to more Discretion, he took more Delight in other Books (as he could get them or borrow them) in which he found more useful and satisfactory Knowledge. And thus *Daniel* spent almost all the Time that could be spared from

from the Business in which his Father employed him, until he came to the Age of eighteen Years.

I must not here omit to take Notice that *Daniel's* Father and Mother, being very strict in their Morals, always took great Care to breed up their Children in the same good Way, and to beget in them the greatest Abhorrence of all that Wick-
edness, which every Day they could not but see and hear to be practised by many others. And *Daniel* having read several Books of plain practical Piety (which one way or other came to his Hands) was thereby very much confirmed in virtuous Principles.

C H A P. II.

Daniel's Conference with a Romish Priest about Reading the Holy Scriptures.

DANIEL was naturally very inquisitive after Knowledge of all Sorts, as he had Opportunity for it: But, above all, he was most carefully attentive to those rational Arguments, which by Men of all Religions are brought to prove the Certainty of a Life to come, in which our Happiness or Misery will entirely depend upon our good or evil Behaviour in this Life: And when he came to be about seventeen Years of Age, he was very industrious to inform himself touching every thing that is necessary to eternal Salvation. In order to which he diligently read such Books as were put into his Hands by the *Romish* Clergy: And happening to meet with two or three plain little Books written against *Popery*, he carefully
read

read them also. And finding that both Parties insisted upon the Authority of the *Holy Scriptures*, he resolved to apply himself to the Study of them, without which he thought it impossible for him to judge which Side was in the Right. Upon which he privately applied himself to the Priest who was his Confessor, and desired his Leave that he might read the *Bible*.

The Priest was shock'd at this Request of his, and desiring to put him by from his Design, told him that the *Authentic Bible* was only extant in the *Latin Tongue*; which Language, *says he*, you do not understand, and therefore cannot read it.

" But, says *Daniel*, I have often heard it said, " that there is no material Difference between our " *Latin Bible* and the *English Translation* of " it, that is among the *Protestants*; and I have " heard some of our most learned Clergy say, " that they would be content to try the whole " Controversy that is between us and the *Protestants*, even by the *Protestants own Bible*. I " pray then why may I not read the *Holy Scriptures* in the *English Tongue*?

" The *Holy Scriptures* (says the Priest) are very " hard to be understood: And if such a one as " you undertakes the Reading of them, he will be " in great Danger of misinterpreting them, and " thereby of being misled into pernicious Errors " and Heresies, which are destructive of Salvation. Your safest Way, therefore, is to take your " Religion upon the Authority of the *Church*, " and not to perplex your self with studying the " *Scriptures*, which are beyond your Understanding.

" But (says *Daniel*) since the Profession of the " *true Religion* is certainly the chiefest, if not the " only

“ only Mark of the *true Church*, how is it possi-
 “ ble for me to know which is the *true Church*,
 “ except I first inform my self what the *true Re-*
 “ *ligion* is? and from whence can I with Cer-
 “ tainty have the Information, but from the
 “ *Word of God*, which all Christians own the
 “ *Holy Scriptures* to be? He that is blind must
 “ be content to follow the best and honest-
 “ est *Guide* he can get: And if his *Guide* mis-
 “ leads him, our good God will punish not the
 “ poor *blind Man* who cannot help it, but the
 “ *Guide*, who ought to have known better
 “ Things. But since God has given me some
 “ Degree of Reason and Understanding, I think
 “ my self obliged to make the best Inquiry
 “ I can into the Way of Salvation, and if, for
 “ want of such Inquiry, I should run the Ha-
 “ zard of being misled, I cannot but think that
 “ God would punish me for my Negligence.
 “ In the Books written by *Roman Catholicks* for
 “ the Use of the common People, I have often
 “ met with Sentences taken out of the *Holy*
 “ *Scriptures*, which are as plain and intelligible
 “ as any Words can be: And if I read the
 “ the whole *Bible* over, I suppose I shall meet
 “ with many more such easy Passages, of which
 “ I shall endeavour to make the best Use; and
 “ as for all those which are doubtful or difficult,
 “ I shall not take upon me to interpret them;
 “ nor will I offer to form any Opinion from
 “ such Passages as are obscure, except they are
 “ plainly cleared up to my Satisfaction.

It was not possible to give a satisfactory An-
 swer to what was thus plainly and rationally
 urged by *Daniel*: And therefore the Priest did
 not attempt it; but only gave him a Charge not

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to disobey the Church, in reading the *Bible* without a Licence. " Sir, (says *Daniel*) I think that " God has given me a sufficient Licence to read " and study his Holy Word; and if you can " prove that He has given Authority to the " Church to restrain me from it, I shall " readily obey." And thus the Conversation between *Daniel* and his Confessor, for that Time, ended.

C H A P. III.

The Success of Daniel's Reading the Holy Scriptures.

BEFORE *Daniel* began to study the *Holy Scriptures* (which was about the eighteenth Year of his Age) he was very well informed what those Doctrines of Religion are wherein the *Protestants* and the *Romanists* agree; and what the peculiar Tenets of the Church of *Rome* are, which by the *Protestants* are rejected. All those Doctrines, about which we have no Controversy with the Church of *Rome*, he there found to be very plainly delivered, as far as the Belief of them is required from us by God. But as for the *Peculiar Tenets* of his Church, to his great Amazement, he could find no Footsteps of them; and what few Passages of *Holy Scripture* he had read or heard urged in Favour of them, as soon as he came to observe the Connexion of those same Passages in the *Scripture* itself, he plainly found them to be distorted and

and wrested from their manifest Intent and Meaning. Some of the Instances hereof which he particularly remarked were these :

He had from his Childhood been taught, under the Pain of eternal Damnation, to believe that the *Roman Church* was the only Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, and that the *Pope* or Bishop of *Rome* is the Successor of *St. Peter*, Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of *Jesus Christ* ; on which Account all *Christians* are bound to be obedient to him. But in all the *Holy Scriptures* he could not find the least Suggestion of any of these Things. *St. Paul* has written a large Epistle to the *Romans*, that is, to the *Church of Rome*, of which it is pretended that *St. Peter* was at that Time Bishop. But in all this Epistle he does not give the least Intimation of any such Privilege belonging to that Church or the Bishop of it : Neither does he therein make the least mention of *St. Peter*, although, at the Conclusion of it, he salutes no less than Twenty-six Persons by Name.

The same *St. Paul*, when he mentions the *Apostles*, as being the *First* in the Church of *Christ* ; *1 Cor.* xii. 28, and *Eph.* iv. 11. gives not the least Hint of any Superiority or Precedency that belonged to *St. Peter* : On the contrary, he declares that he himself *was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles* ; *2 Cor.* xii. 11. And when *Peter* was come to Antioch, *I withstood him to the Face*, says he, *because he was to be blamed*, *Gal.* ii. 11.

Many Things are, in the *New Testament*, recorded of *St. Peter* ; but no Intimation is there given, either that he was Bishop of *Rome* or appointed by *Christ* to that particular Office. And if

ever

ever he were Bishop of that Place; yet *Daniel* could find no such Evidence for it, as to make it an Article of Faith.

St. *Peter*, in both his Epistles, takes to himself no higher Title than that of an *Apostle* of Jesus Christ; Chap. i. v. i. And in his first Epistle, Chap. v. v. i. he styles himself an *Elder*. But if he had been the *Vicar* of Christ, and *Prince* of the *Apostles*; certainly he would have so mentioned himself, that his Epistles might thereby have had the stronger Influence upon all Christians.

When *Daniel* first read those Words of our Blessed Saviour, spoken to St. *Peter*, Mat. xvi. 18. *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church*; he did not well know what to think of them. But when he came to those Words of St. *Paul*, Eph. ii. 19, 20. where we are told that Christians, being the *Household* of God, are built upon the *Foundation* of the *Apostles* and *Prophets* (no Distinction being there made between St. *Peter* and the rest) Jesus Christ himself being the *Chief Corner-Stone*; and compared them with those other Words of the same Apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 11. *Other Foundation can no Man lay but that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST*; he very plainly saw that the *Rock*, upon which our Saviour intended to build His Church, was not St. *Peter* any more than the rest of the *Apostles*; but *Christ* himself, that is to say, that *Faith* in *Christ* was to be the *Foundation* or *Rock*, upon which the Christian Church was for ever to be established. In which Belief he was thoroughly confirmed by looking back and well considering the whole Passage.

Our Saviour (v. 15.) had put this Question to his Disciples, *Whom say ye that I am?* Simon *Peter*

ter (making a ready Profession of his Faith) answered and said, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.* And Jesus answered and said unto him: *Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona: For Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but my Father which is in Heaven.* And I say unto thee, *that thou art Peter; and upon this Rock* (that is to say, this Faith of which thou hast now made Profession) *I will build my Church.* This is the *Rock*, this is the Foundation upon which my Church is for ever to be supported; and the *Gates of Hell shall not prevail against It.*

It is not to be wondred that *Daniel*, being a very inquisitive young Man, should make such obvious Remarks as these: Especially if we consider with what a serious and impartial View he betook himself to the Study of the *Holy Scriptures*; and that, for three Years together, he made this his chief Employment upon every Sunday, and at all other Times that he could get for his Retirement.

Daniel had been taught, under Pain of Damnation, to believe that the Saints, departed this Life, are to be worshipped and prayed to. But throughout the whole *Bible* he could find no manner of Command or Example for any such Prayers or Worship. He could not but observe that *St. Paul* expressly forbids the *worshipping of Angels*, Col. ii. 18. and that the *Angels* themselves utterly refuse all such Worship; of which he took Notice of two very remarkable Instances; *Rev. xix. 10.* and *xxii. 8, 9.* If then (thought he) no such Worship ought to be given to the Blessed *Angels*; what Reason can there be why we should so worship the *Saints departed*;

departed ; and this without any Command from God for it ?

He had been taught, under Pain of Damnation, to believe that Honour and Worship ought to be given to the *Images* of *Christ*, the *Virgin Mary*, and the other *Saints* : At which he was astonished when he read the *Second Commandment*, and so many other Passages of *Scripture*, where the Worship of *Images* is absolutely forbidden.

He had been taught to make the Belief of *Purgatory* a necessary Article of his Faith ; and had often been told by his Priest, that this same *Purgatory* (according to the *Catechism* of their Church) was a *Fire*, by which the *Souls* of the *Pious*, being for a determined Time tormented, are expiated. But in all the *Bible* he could not find the least Word of any such *Purgatory Fire*. The only Passage, which, at the first Glance seemed to look that Way, was what *St. Paul* says, *2 Cor. iii. 13.* *Every Man's Work shall be made manifest — — Because it shall be revealed by Fire, and the Fire shall try every Man's Work of what Sort it is, &c.* When *Daniel* had considered this whole Passage, from the Beginning of the Ninth to the End of the Fifteenth Verse, he plainly saw that *Fire* was there mentioned only by way of Similitude or Comparison ; that as the Purity of *Gold* is tried by the *Fire*, so will there be a *Trial* of the *Works*, of which he is there speaking : Nor is there the least Intimation that this *Fire* (whatever is meant by it) is for the tormenting of *Souls* in order to their being expiated.

Upon this Occasion, he often thought of those Words, *Rev. xiv. 13.* *Blessed are the Dead which*

die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours: Which Passage did not seem to him to be consistent with their being *tormented in Purgatory*; where it is supposed their Souls may for a long Time continue, if they are not delivered by Masses or a Plenary Indulgence.

From many plain Passages of *Scripture*, *Daniel* was convinced that if, by true Faith and sincere Repentance, a Man had made his Peace with God, and so continued to the Time of his Death; his Sins were fully pardoned through the Propitiation of *Christ's* Death, and therefore needed not any other *Expiation*.

In the Celebration of *MASS*, *Daniel* had observed that the Priest, upon some Occasions, distinctly pronounced this Word *Oremus*, and then made a little Pause before he went on. His Curiosity prompted him to enquire what the Meaning of this Word was; and when he was told that it signified, *Let us pray*, and was a *Call* to the People to join in Prayer with the Priest; he could not but demand how it was possible that the People, who understood not a Word of *Latin*, could join in Prayers that were made in that Language. But when he had read and well considered the fourteenth Chapter of *St. Paul's* First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, he was fully convinced that the Practice of the Church of *Rome*, in having all their Public Worship in that Language, which very few of the Common People understand, was directly contrary both to Reason, and to the plain Doctrine of that Apostle. Nor could he imagine why this Practice is still kept up, except it be to keep the People in Ignorance.

Many

Many Passages of *Scripture* he met with, whereby we are sufficiently assured that, if we humbly acknowledge and confess our Sins unto God, and heartily repent and amend our Lives, we shall obtain pardon and Forgiveness, thro' the Mercy of God and the Mediation of *Jesus Christ*, who gave himself to be a Propitiation for us. He was also of Opinion that in many Cases, it might be a great Comfort to a penitent Sinner, to make the State of his Conscience fully known to some grave and discreet Pastor of the Church, from whom he might receive farther Assurance of God's Pardon, together with wholesome spiritual Advice for his Soul's Health. But he could no where find that God had commanded every Man to make a particular private Confession of all his Sins to a Priest, as the Church of *Rome* requires them, under pain of Damnation, to do. And it was no small Scandal to him to find that, in that Church, Men are encouraged to believe, that, however wicked their whole Lives may have been, yet, if upon their Death-bed they are sorry for their Sins, -and, upon a full Confession of them to a Priest, receive his Absolution for them, they shall certainly be saved, altho' for some Time they may be detained in *Purgatory*; from whence they make sure to be soon delivered, if a few *Masses* are said for them, which may be purchased for Money. Upon which Confidence a great many Men go boldly on in the Practice of Lewdness, Drunkenness, and many other Sins, both of Commission and Omission, even to the very End of their Days.

It is needless to give a particular Account of all the Reflections which *Daniel* made upon the worshipping of Relicks, Pilgrimages, Extreme
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Unction, and all the rest of the Doctrines and Practices of the *Roman Church*, of which he could find no Footsteps in the *Holy Scriptures*. But his Thoughts of the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, and the Consequences of it, ought not, I think, here to be omitted.

He had been taught, under pain of Damnation, to believe, that, in the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the Bread and Wine are substantially converted, or changed into the real Body and Blood of *Christ*, and that, under the Appearances of Bread and Wine, *Christ* Himself (Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity) was totally and substantially present, and swallowed down alive into the Stomach of every one who received the Sacrament: That the Sacrament it self (or the *Hof*, as they commonly call it) was to be worshipped with the very same Worship that is due to God Himself: That in this Sacrament *Christ* is offered up as a *true, proper, and propitiatory* Sacrifice for the Living and the Dead: And that under one Kind only, whole and entire *Christ* and a true Sacrament is received. For all which wonderful Doctrine, *Daniel* could find no Foundation in *Scripture*, but this alone, That, when *Christ* first instituted this Holy Sacrament, He gave *Bread* and a *Cup* to his Apostles, and said, *This is my Body, this is my Blood*, Mat. xxvi. 26, &c. Which Words the Church of *Rome* will have to be taken in the strictest literal Sense: And if this Foundation fails, the whole Fabric of these Doctrines, which are built upon it, must of Necessity fall to the Ground.

Upon this *Daniel* thus reasoned within himself: " If all the Words of *Holy Scripture* are
" thus to be literally understood, then we must
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“ believe that God (who is an Infinite SPIRIT)
 “ has *Hands, Arms,* and other Members like a
 “ Human Body, with many more Absurdities.
 “ Or if all the Words of *Christ* Himself are thus
 “ to be taken, then we must believe that *Christ*
 “ is literally a *Door*, Joh. x. 9. a *Shepherd*, ver.
 “ 11. a *Vine*, a true *Vine*, Chap. xv. 1. and that
 “ the *Cup* (which literally signifies not the Li-
 “ quor but the *Vessel* which contains it) that
 “ the *Cup* (I say) is literally the *New Testament*
 “ in *Christ's Blood*, Luk. xxii. 20. with many
 “ more Things that never entred into the
 “ Thoughts of any Christian, or Man of com-
 “ mon Sense. What other Reason then can be
 “ given why all Men agree to take thousands of
 “ Expressions, in *Holy Scripture* and other Books
 “ and Discourses, not in a literal, but altogether
 “ in a figurative Sense, except it be this, that
 “ where the literal Sense of an Expression is
 “ manifestly absurd, and the figurative Sense of
 “ it plain and reasonable, and agreeable to the
 “ common Way of speaking, there the for-
 “ mer should be rejected, and the latter taken?
 “ Now if we take those Words of our Saviour
 “ (*This is my Body, This is my Blood*) in a li-
 “ teral Sense, a Train of Absurdities, directly
 “ contrary to the Senses and Reason of Man-
 “ kind, will most manifestly follow: But if we
 “ take them figuratively, as if our Saviour had
 “ said, *This is the Representation of my Body,*
 “ *and of my Blood;* there is nothing herein but
 “ what is agreeable to Reason, and to the com-
 “ mon Way of Speech among Mankind.”

Touching the Offering up of *Christ* as a *Pro-*
pitiatory Sacrifice in the Celebration of the Sa-
 crament

crament of the Lord's Supper, or the *Mass*, as the *Romanists* call it, *Daniel* had been informed that a *Propitiatory Sacrifice* is nothing else but a *Sacrifice for Sin*, in order to the atoning or appeasing God's Wrath against it, and obtaining the Remission, or Pardon of it. Upon this he took great Notice of the Words of the Apostle, *Heb. ix. 22. Without shedding of Blood is no Remission*; and of God's own Words to the People of *Israel*, *Lev. xvii. 11. The Life of the Flesh is in the Blood; and I have given it to you upon the Altar to make an Atonement for your Souls: For it is the Blood that maketh an Atonement for the Soul.* From which two Passages, in Conjunction with all the Accounts which we have of such Sacrifices in the *Old Testament*, he gathered, *First*, That nothing can be made a true, proper, propitiatory Sacrifice, but that which has *Blood* and *Life*: And, *Secondly*, That the *Blood* of such a Sacrifice must necessarily be shed, and the *Life* of it taken away. And that the constant Practice of the People of *Israel*, in offering such Sacrifices, was agreeable to this Notion of them, he found was not denied.

Here then again, *Daniel* thus reasoned with himself, "Will any Man say, that the *Blood* of Christ is shed, and His *Life* taken away in the Celebration of the *Mass*? And if not, how can he be there offered as a true, proper, propitiatory Sacrifice?"

Daniel also took much Notice of the following Words of the Apostle, *Heb. ix. 24. &c. Christ is not entred into the Holy Places made with Hands; which are the Figures of the True; but into Heaven it self, now to appear in the Presence*

Presence of God for us: Nor yet that He should offer Himself OFTEN, as the High Priest entereth into the Holy Place every Year with the Blood of others: (For then must he OFTEN have suffered since the Foundation of the World) but now ONCE, in the End of the World, hath he appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of Himself. From whence it appeared very plain to him, First, That our Saviour's offering Himself, as a Sacrifice for Sin, was by his suffering Death upon the Cross: Secondly, That if he had been OFTEN to be offered in Sacrifice, he must OFTEN have suffered: And therefore since, in the Celebration of the Mass, He does not suffer (as He did upon the Cross) He is not there offered in Sacrifice: And Thirdly, That His ONCE offering of Himself in Sacrifice upon the Cross is sufficient for the putting away of Sin (provided that we truly repent of it) and therefore that there is no Necessity that He should often be offered in Sacrifice.

From the Words of our Blessed Saviour, *This do in Remembrance of me*, Luk. xxii. 19. and those of St. Paul, *As often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come*, 1 Cor. xii. 26. Daniel was very sensible that this Holy Sacrament was appointed for a Commemoration of the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross: And from those other Words of St. Paul, *The Cup of Blessing which we bless, Is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? The Bread which we break, Is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?* 1 Cor. x. 16. he was no less sensible that this Bread and this Cup are the Means ordained by God, whereby we do

commu-

communicate in, or participate of the Benefits of that Sacrifice. But that *Christ* Himself is *truly and properly sacrificed* as often as *Mafs* is celebrated, appeared to him to be a most groundless Fancy.

As to the worshipping of the Holy Sacrament with the same Worship that is due to God: Besides that *Daniel* could not find the least Intimation of any such Thing in all the *Bible*, he thus reasoned with himself: "Certainly that Worship which is *due to God*, the Great and Infinite Creator of Heaven and Earth, ought to be given to none but Himself, *who will not give his Glory to another*; *Isai. xlviii. 11*. Nor could I thus Worship *the Son and the Holy Ghost*, if the *Scripture* did not convince me that they are one God together with the *Father*; which I believe by *Faith*, altho' it is beyond my *Reason* to comprehend it. Now when a Priest consecrates a *Wafer*, Does this Consecration change the *Wafer* into *God*, without the least Appearance of any Alteration made in it? If so; I desire that it may be clearly proved from *the Word of God*: But if not, How can I, with a safe Conscience, give *Divine Worship* to it? And if the Priest has happened to make any Mistake in the Performance of this Consecration (many of which I am told there are, that render the Consecration altogether null and void) What is it then which the People Worship? Certainly (said *Daniel*) *Divine Worship* ought always to be grounded upon *Faith* (for *how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?* *Rom. x. 14.*) And how can I be sure, with the
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“ Certainty of *Faith*, that the Priest is never
 “ mistaken in any Thing that is necessary to the
 “ due Consecration of the Holy Sacrament ? ”

Daniel had observed that in every Place of the *New Testament*, where the Receiving of this Holy Sacrament is directed or commanded, express mention is made of the *Cup*. Our Blessed Saviour gave the *Cup* to His Disciples saying, *Drink ye all of it* ; Mat. xxvi. 26. *And they all drank of it*, Mar. xiv. 23. The *Cup* is also expressly mentioned, *Luk. xxii. 20.* and *1 Cor. xi. 25, &c. and v. 28.* Let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and DRINK OF THAT CUP, says St. Paul. From all which Passages, it appeared most plain that *Christians* are as much commanded to *drink of the Cup*, as to *eat of the Bread* in this Holy Sacrament : And consequently, that to deprive the People of *the Cup* is a most manifest Violation of *Christ's* own Institution.

C H A P. IV.

*Observations made by Daniel in his going
 through the Holy Scriptures.*

THE principal View, with which *Daniel* first betook himself to the Study of the *Holy Scriptures*, was that by their Light he might the better inform his Understanding and Judgment touching the Points in Controversy between the *Protestants* and Church of *Rome* : And in this Study he spent almost all the Time he could be Master of, for more than three Years ; during which

which he read but little in any other Book except the *Bible*; with which when he became thoroughly acquainted, he again set himself to read other Books; and whatever Doctrines of Religion he found advanced in any of them, he thought he had as good a Right as the People of *Berea* to *search the Scriptures daily, whether those Things were so.* Acts xvii. 11. The Minister of the Parish freely lent, and sometimes gave him such Books as he thought would be of most Service to him, and among the rest, two or three that very plainly proved the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the Divine Authority of the *Holy Scriptures*, with which *Daniel* was much satisfied and delighted.

By the diligent Attention that *Daniel* always gave to every thing which he read, he very much improved the natural Capacity of his Mind: In-
somuch that, besides the Knowledge which he had gotten in the *Romish* Controversies, he made many other Observations, chiefly grounded on the *Holy Scriptures*; of which I shall now give some Account, that thereby it may appear how far a Man of common Understanding may make a Progress in the Knowledge of Religion, if he carefully sets himself to it.

He had often taken Notice that every Man, and other living Creature, every Tree and Plant of the Field, every House and other Thing framed and fashioned by the Art of Man, that all these Things had a *Beginning of their Being*: But *how this whole World first began to Be* was a Thing that often puzzled him, until he read the *Bible*; by many Passages of which, as well as the first Chapter of *Genesis*, and by his own Reason, he was fully convinced that this World was not
made

made by *Blind Chance*, which could never jumble so very many Things together, into that beautiful and useful Order, in which we now behold them: Neither was it made by what Men commonly call *Nature*, which is as *Blind* as *Chance* it self, if it be not guided by a Superior Power. But it was framed and fashioned, and put into that Order, in which we see it, by the Wisdom and Power of God, who is Eternal. For if God were not Eternal, without any Beginning of his Being, *Daniel* most manifestly saw that Nothing could possibly have ever been produced or brought to Be.

He took great Notice of the very different Way of the Creation of *Man* from that of all other living Creatures. *These* were by God's Command produced out of the Earth and the Water, and derive what Souls they have, as well as their Bodies, altogether from those Elements. *Let the Waters bring forth, &c.* says God, *Gen. i. 20.* And, *Let the Earth bring forth, &c. v. 24, &c.* But altho' *the Lord God formed Man* (that is to say his Body) *of the Dust of the Ground*, yet He Himself *breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life*, whereby *Man became a Living Soul*, *Gen. ii. 7.* All *Brutes* are acted and guided by certain Inclinations, which we call *Instincts*, implanted in their Nature, which they have no Power to resist: But the noble Faculty of *Reason*, with which *Man* is endowed, enables him to guide, conduct, and controul even his strongest Natural Inclinations, whenever he foresees any Evil or Inconvenience that would arise from the following of them. This is that *Image of God in which Man was created*, and whereby he is

enabled to exercise that *Dominion* which God has given him over other Creatures. *Gen. i. 26, 27.* From which Consideration, joined with many other passages of *Scripture* and the Reason of Things, *Daniel* firmly concluded that *the Soul of Man is Immortal*, and does not perish, when by Death it is separated from the *Body*.

Daniel look'd upon *Reason*, as being the *Voice of God speaking unto Man in a natural Way*: And, by a due Attendance even to this *Voice* alone, he thought that every Man might be fully convinced that it is God's Will that all Mankind should honour, worship, and adore Him their Great Creator, and that they should live soberly, temperately, chastely, justly, and honestly among themselves; as also that he who knowingly acts contrary to the Will of God, may justly expect to be severely punished for it, and that he who sincerely endeavours to obey and please God, in every Thing, may reasonably expect to be rewarded: And, Lastly, That if these Rewards and Punishments are not sufficiently distributed in this Life, there certainly will be a Life to come, for the due Distribution of them.

This being so, it astonished him to find that our First Parents, *Adam* and *Eve*, so soon became disobedient to God; and that in all Ages, from the very beginning of the World, Wickedness of all Sorts has so far prevailed among Mankind. And altho' they, who, by *first* going astray mislead other Men, have nothing to plead in Excuse for themselves; yet (thought he) what shall become of many Millions of Men, who all along have, and every Day do transgress the Laws of God out of meer *Ignorance*, and because they
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never have been instructed in them? Must all these be eternally damned without Distinction?

From these perplexing Thoughts he was soon relieved by considering what his own Reason in some Measure suggested, and the *Holy Scriptures* more fully made known to him, That *with Righteousness God will judge the World, and the People with Equity*, Psal. xcvi. 9. And that *as many as have sinned without Law, shall also perish without Law; and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law*, Rom. i. 12. From whence he concluded, *First*, That God will judge no Man by a Law, of which he has been altogether ignorant, and never had the Opportunity of knowing: *Secondly*, That all such Men shall be judged by their own Consciences, *by the Law written in their Hearts*, to which *their Conscience bears Witness*, Rom. i. 15. So that when, at the last Great Day, any Man shall be condemned by God, he will be sensible in *his own Conscience*, that he justly deserves the Punishment inflicted on him.

Daniel, upon this Occasion, called to mind the Words of our Blessed Saviour, *Mat. xi. 21. Woe unto thee Chorazin, Woe unto thee Bethsaida: For if the mighty Works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you: Upon which he made this Reflection, "If the "People of Tyre and Sidon (who were Heathens and Idolators) shall meet with such a "tolerable Sentence in the Day of Judgment; "and that for this Reason, because God fore- "saw that, if they had had the same powerful*
C 2 "Evidence

" Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel that o-
 " thers had, they would have *repented* and turned
 " to God; how do I know but that there have
 " been, are, and will be very many more in the
 " same or like Circumstances? All which is ma-
 " nifestly grounded upon that most equitable
 " Rule which our Saviour lays down, and every
 " Man's Reason must assent to: *That Servant*
 " *which knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not*
 " *himself, neither did according to his Will, shall*
 " *be beaten with many Stripes. But he that knew*
 " *not, and did commit Things worthy of Stripes,*
 " *shall be beaten with few Stripes. For unto*
 " *whomsoever much is given, of him (and of him*
 " *only, in Proportion to what he has received,*
 " *Mat. xxv. 14, &c.) shall much be required,*
 Luk. xxii. 47.

These Considerations made *Daniel* look with
 great Abhorrence upon the Uncharitableness and
 barbarous Cruelty of the *Romanists*, who peremp-
 torily pronounce eternal Damnation on all who
 live and die out of their Communion, notwith-
 standing that they believe in *Jesus Christ* and
 lead most virtuous Lives; and this without mak-
 ing any Allowance for the invincible Prejudices
 of Education: Altho' at the same Time they
 maintain, that if a Man leads a most wicked and
 profligate Life, yet if, before his Death, even the
 Fear of Hell makes him sorry for his Sins, and
 he confesses them to a Priest, receives his Ab-
 solution, and dies within the Pale of their Church,
 he shall certainly be saved; altho' for some Time
 he may be tormented in *Purgatory*.

Daniel took great Notice that, To preserve
 the Knowledge of the True God from being ut-
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terly extinguished among Mankind, who had almost universally perverted their Ways; God was pleased by Revelation to make Himself more fully known to some particular Men, such as *Noah*, *Melchisedech*, *Job*, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; and afterwards to make Choice of the People of *Israel*, to whom, by *Moses* and the *Prophets*, He gave more Instruction touching Himself and His Laws. *Daniel* also concluded that, when the People of *Israel* and *Judah* were, for their Sins, carried away in Captivity into far distant Countries, by this Means the Knowledge of the true God was in some Measure propagated among the Heathen Nations; of which he met with some Instances in the Book of the *Prophet Daniel* and elsewhere. And this he look'd upon as the Way whereby God thought fit to prepare the World for that full and complete Revelation of Himself and His Holy Will, which afterwards was made known by *Jesus Christ* and His Apostles, who were sent to *teach all Nations*, Mat xxviii. 19.

For some Time, *Daniel* did not know the Meaning of the Word *APOCRYPHA*; under which Title, he took Notice that some Books, placed at the End of the *Old Testament*, are comprehended. But when he was informed that these *Apocryphal Books*, or any of them, were not originally written in the *Hebrew Tongue*, nor ever received among the *Jews* (unto whom were committed the *Oracles of God*; Rom. iii. 2.) he could not look upon them as any part of the *Old Testament*, altho' he met with many useful Things in them.

In some of these *Apocryphal Books*, particularly in that called, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Chapters, and in that of *Baruch*, Chap. vi. called, *The Epistle of Jeremiah*, he found a great deal said against the *Worship of Images*, which he was not able to reconcile with the Practice of the Church of *Rome*: But in none of them could he find any Thing favourable to, any of the Peculiar Tenets of that Church, except one Passage in the *Second Book of the Maccabees*, Chap. xxii. v. 45. where the *making a Reconciliation for the Dead* is spoken of with Approbation. But when from the Second Chapter of this Book, v. 23. he was informed that the whole was only an *Abridgment* of a History written by one *Jason of Cyrene*, and found the Author making an Apology for his Performance, in these Words (so far beneath the Dignity of an inspired Writer) *If I have done well, and as is fitting the Story, it is that which I desired: But if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto*; Chap. xv. 38. *Daniel* plainly saw that no necessary Point of Faith or Religion could be grounded upon the Authority of this Book; besides the Objection that lies against it in common with all the rest of the *Apocrypha*.

Altho' many *Ceremonial Laws* and *Positive Ordinances* were by Divine Authority prescribed to the People of *Israel*, yet *Daniel* observed that God, by His Holy Prophets, chiefly insisted upon the Observation of the *Moral Law*, which wholly consists in loving, fearing, and honouring God, Justice and Beneficence to all other Men, together with Sobriety, Temperance, and Chastity: Insomuch that God seems even to slight and re-

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ject His own *outward Ordinances*, when Men began to set a greater Value upon them than upon *Moral Duties*. Many Instances of this *Daniel* took Notice of in the *Old Testament*; particularly the First Chapter of *Isaiah's Prophecy* (which he very often read) made a great Impression upon his Mind; and he often used in his Meditations to repeat to himself those Words of the *Prophet Micah*, Chap. vi. 6. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the High God? Shall I come before Him with Burnt-offerings, with Calves of a Year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oil? Shall I give my First-born for my Transgression, the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul? He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* And upon thoroughly considering every Part of the *New Testament*, he found that the whole Tenor of the *Gospel* cannot more fully, in few Words be express'd, than *St. Paul* has done it, *Tit. ii. 11.* where he tells us that *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men, teaching us, that, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.* Upon which *Daniel* could not but very much disapprove of those Men who, by their Practice, appear to place their Religion much more in Hearing *Mass*, Confession to a Priest, performing Penance, Saying their Beads, Abstaining from Flesh upon certain Days, Receiving the Holy Sacrament at certain Times, and such like outward Observances, than in a serious

rious and deep Sense of the Love and Fear of God, and the conscientious and diligent Performance of their Duty to God, themselves, and all other Men.

However difficult it was to *Daniel* to find out the true meaning and full Import of many obscure Passages of *Holy Scripture*, yet every Thing that is necessary to Man's Salvation appeared to him to be therein so fully and plainly set forth, as to leave no Doubt in him about them, or any of them. And therefore he resolved to go on with studying the *Scripture*; and to imbibe the *sincere Milk of the Word*, that he might grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2. In which he was very much encouraged by many Passages that he met with in the *Scripture* it self. *Prove all Things, hold fast that which is good*, 1 Theff. v. 21. *Believe not every Spirit; but try the Spirits, whether they are of God*, 1 John iv. 1. *Search the Scriptures*, John v. 39. *Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. with many more Texts to the like purpose. And that, by God's Grace and Assistance, he should sufficiently understand the *Scriptures* in order to his Salvation, he found himself well assured by God's Promise, that *He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him*, Luk. xi. 13. And if any of you lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him, Jam. i. 5. For which Reason, he often lifted up his Thoughts to God in such Meditations as these; *Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wondrous Things out of thy Law*, Psal. cxix. 18. *Teach me, O Lord, the Way of*
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thy Statutes, and I shall keep it unto the End. Give me Understanding, and I shall keep thy Law, yea I shall observe it with my whole Heart, v. 33.

Among the many Observations which *Daniel* made in his frequent Reading of *the Holy Scriptures* (which I need not stand particularly to recount) he took great Notice that the Duty of Relieving the Poor, the Widow, the Fatherless and Distressed, was in a more than ordinary manner in very many Places inculcated and pressed. Of this he had often heard from the Priest in his Sermons or Exhortations to the People, without perceiving that either he himself or others were much moved by it. But when he read these Words of *Jesus Christ* Himself, *Mat. xxv. 31, &c.* wherein he gives a Description of the Great Day of Judgment; and there found that *giving Meat to the Hungry, and Drink to the Thirsty, taking in the Stranger, clothing the Naked, and visiting the Sick and the Prisoner*, would in that Day, be made the great Test whereby to distinguish the *Righteous* from the *Wicked*, the *Blessed* from the *Cursed*: And when he read those Words of *St. James*, *Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World; Jam. i. 27.* he was pricked in his Heart (*Acts ii. 37.*) and found the Word of God to be quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart, *Heb. iv. 12.* “ Good God! “ (said he to himself) do those rich Men, who “ live in Plenty and regard not the Poor, sincere-
“ ly

“ ly believe That Gospel which they profess?
 “ How easy would it be for them, by a small
 “ Retrenchment of their Vanity and Luxury
 “ (which they might easily spare) to keep many
 “ miserable Wretches from starving and perish-
 “ ing? But I beg Pardon: My Business is not to
 “ judge other Men, but to take Care of the per-
 “ formance of my own Duty.”

Daniel had from his Childhood been taught, according to his Ability, to shew Compassion to the Poor and Distressed: But from this Time forward, he doubled his Diligence in the Performance of this Duty. What he could honestly save out of his Earnings, he gladly bestowed on those whom he found to be the greatest Objects of Pity; and did all he could to make their Case known to those who were better able to relieve them. Nor was it a small Comfort to him that *the poor Widow's two Mites* were as well accepted as the greater Gifts of those who were *rich*, Mar. xii. 42.

But he took great Notice of what *St. Paul* says, *1 Thess. iii. 10. That if any would not work, neither should he eat*: And therefore whenever he met with a sturdy vagrant Beggar who was able to get his Bread by his Labour, but through Laziness would not do it; he never failed to complain to some neighbouring Magistrate, that such a Man might be corrected, and not suffered to rob the real Poor of the Alms of well-disposed Persons.

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C H A P. V.

Daniel's Second Conference with the Romish Priest.

DANIEL constantly spent great part of every Sunday, and at least an Hour (and sometimes much more) every other Day, in the Study of the *Holy Scriptures*, upon which he was always very intent. His Method each Day was to read a good Portion of the *Old Testament*, and then about as much of the *New*: Whereby he came to read the *New Testament* (which is much the shorter of the two) much oftner than he did the *Old*; and became so well acquainted with it, as to be able readily to find most of the principal Passages of it.

Being thus furnished, he went again to visit his old Confessor, and plainly told him that he had read the *Bible* again and again; and the *New Testament* many Times over with the greatest Attention; but that in the Whole he could not find any Foundation for the peculiar Doctrines of the Church of *Rome*.

“ My Friend (says the Priest) you do not rightly understand the *Scriptures*; and you ought to receive the Interpretation of them from the *Church*.”

“ Sir (says Daniel) I gather my Faith and Religion altogether from such Passages of *Scripture* as are very plain: And these plain Passages enable me to understand many more, which otherwise, perhaps, would be obscure and doubtful. I am answerable to God, and to
“ none

“ none but Him, for my Honesty and Sincerity
 “ in this Way of proceeding. But I do not see
 “ what Authority any *Church* has to impose Her
 “ *Interpretations* upon me, when my clearest Un-
 “ derstanding assures me that these same Inter-
 “ pretations are contrary to the plain Meaning
 “ of the *Scripture* it self, and some of them to
 “ common Sense and Reason. I desire you to
 “ prove, if you can, that God has given such
 “ Authority as you maintain, to any, and what
 “ *Church*, and to shew me who it is that is, by
 “ God’s Appointment, to inform me of the true
 “ Meaning of the Church’s *Interpretations*, in
 “ Case that I do not at first understand them.”

“ The Church (says the Priest) has received
 “ her *Interpretations* and Her Doctrines by *Tradi-
 “ tion* all along from *Christ* and His Apostles.”

“ Sir (says *Daniel*) the many Miracles that
 “ were wrought by *Christ* and His Apostles, are
 “ so well attested, as that no sober Man can doubt
 “ of the Truth of them. These Miracles abun-
 “ dantly prove that they had God’s Authority for
 “ all that they taught. The *Holy Scriptures* both
 “ of the *Old* and *New Testament* were by the A-
 “ postles delivered to the Christian Church, as
 “ being the *Word of God*. And therefore what-
 “ ever I find to be plainly taught in these *Scip-
 “ tures*, I look upon it as taught by the Apostles.
 “ The exact Agreement in Sense, and for the
 “ most Part in Works (abating for some few Mi-
 “ stakes of the Transcribers or Printers, which
 “ are easily discovered ;) this Agreement (I say)
 “ that is found to be between the prodigious
 “ Number of Copies and Translations of the *Holy
 “ Scriptures*, that (as I am told) are dispersed
 “ throughout the World, and have been so for
 many

" many Ages, most evidently shews that they are
 " the very same now as they were left by the
 " Apostles. But if you have any other Way of
 " proving that this or that particular Doctrine
 " was taught by Christ or His Apostles, and the
 " Belief of it by them declared to be necessary
 " to Salvation, be so good as to let me know it ;
 " and if I am any Way convinced that it was so
 " taught by *Them*, I must of Necessity believe it.
 " But it is absolutely impossible for me to believe
 " any Doctrine before I am convinced of the
 " Truth of it, either by the Reason of the
 " Thing it self, or by the *Divine Authority* of
 " him that teaches it. Matters of *Fact* I can and
 " do believe upon the Testimony of credible Wit-
 " nesses : But bare *Authority*, excepting that of
 " God Himself, cannot possibly bring me to the
 " Belief of any *Religious Doctrine*."

The Priest, not being able to give a Rational
 Answer to what *Daniel* had thus urged, betook
 himself to another Way that is very common a-
 mong them, and with great Assurance told him
 that he would certainly be damned if he became
 a *Protestant* : But (says *Daniel*) *Who art thou that*
judgest another's Servant ? To his own Master he
standeth or falleth : Yea he shall be holden up : For
God is able to make him stand, Rom. xiv. 4.

C H A P. VI.

Daniel becomes a Protestant, and removes into the City.

WHEN *Daniel* clearly found that he could not, with a safe Conscience, continue in the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, to profess Things which he did not believe, and to practise a Worship which, upon full Conviction, he judged to be unlawful ; he set himself diligently to read and consider the *Book of Common Prayer*, that he might be satisfied whether or no the Faith, Worship and Administration of the Sacraments, in the Established Church of *Ireland*, were agreeable to the Word of God : Of all which being soon fully convinced, he resolved through the Grace of God, to spend the Remainder of his Life in the Communion of this *Church*.

Tho' *Daniel* had been all along bred to daily Labour in Country Business ; yet in wet Weather, when he could not work Abroad, he often employed himself in the mending of old Shoes ; at which he soon grew very dextrous, and thereby used sometimes to earn a Penny.

His Father and Mother being now dead, and the Lease of their little Farm expired, *Daniel* thought it most adviseable to turn what little Substance he had into ready Money, and to remove into the neighbouring City, hoping there to get a better Livelihood by this poor Trade which he had taken up, than what he could propose to do by his daily Labour in the Country.

In

In Pursuance of this Design, he took a convenient Room in a back part of the Town, where it was cheapest to be had, and laying out Part of his Money in Leather, with the rest he used to buy old Shoes, which, when he had mended, he exposed to Sale, and thereby got honest Bread for himself and his Family. His Wife was a sincere *Protestant*, and an industrious Woman. They both constantly frequented their Parish Church, and their Behaviour was such as gained them the Good-will of all that knew them.

C H A P. VII.

His Conference with the Minister of his Parish, who came to visit his Wife in her Sickness.

DANIEL's Wife once falling sick, the Minister of the Parish, according to his Duty, came to visit her; and having for some time discoursed with her in a proper Manner, he concluded his Visit with the Prayers of the Church, in which *Daniel* joined with great Reverence, and made the *Responses*, as they are set down in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick. The Minister (who had never seen him before that time) perceiving by his Pronunciation of the *English*, and gathering from his Name that he was an *Irish* Man, asked him whether he had always been bred a *Protestant*. No Sir (says he) I was bred in the Church of *Rome*, until I grew up to be a Man. The Minister, then asked him by what Means he had been made a *Protestant*: Upon which, *Daniel* very modestly gave him an

Account how he came to read and study the *Bible* and some other Books, by which he was fully convinced of the *Romish* Errors. The *Minister* was well pleased with what he said, and asked him whether he had yet been openly received into our *Church*, and had taken out the Bishop's Certificate as the Law directed? " Sir, (says *Daniel*) " when a Man aims at any Benefit *in this World* " by conforming to the Established Church (for " which I do not blame him, if he acts with a " good Conscience) he ought to do what the " Law requires in order thereunto. But I have " no Estate to sue for, or *Purchase* to make, nor " am I qualified for any public Employment. All " that I desire is to get my Living honestly, to enjoy my Conscience here, and to be eternally " happy hereafter. When I was baptized in the " Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy " Ghost, I was admitted as a Member of *Christ's* " Church, and thereby had a Right to *Christian* " Communion, as soon as I should become capable of it. This Privilege I hope I have done " done nothing to forfeit; the *Errors* in " which I was first bred having been my Misfortune and not my Fault: For as soon as I " was convinced of them, I renounced them, " Nor did I offer to harden my Mind against Conviction. Being therefore satisfied that the " Church of *Ireland*, by Law established, is a " pure and sound Part of the Christian Church, " and that therein every Thing necessary to Salvation may fully and freely be had and enjoyed, " I frequent its Worship, and heartily join in *Communion* with it."

The *Minister*, being desirous to make the utmost Trial of *Daniel*, told him that to profess the best Religion

Religion would avail nothing with God, but rather tend to his Condemnation, if it were not accompanied with a holy Life; and therefore desired Leave to ask him whether he took great Care to lead his Life according to the Rules of the Gospel? To which *Daniel* made Answer in these very Words; which I think deserve to be remembred: *God forbid that I should be like the proud Pharisee, to boast of what I do. But if you please to enquire among my Neighbours, I hope you will find that I am no Shame to the Religion I profess.*

The *Minister* then asked him whether he made use of that Knowledge to which he had attained, in endeavouring to bring over any of his *Papish* Friends or Acquaintance to the *Protestant* Religion? “Indeed (says *Daniel*) I have made many Attempts that way; but to very little Purpose. From the Time that I declared my self a *Protestant*, the *Romish* Priests would not enter far into any such *Conversation* with me; and the common People (with whom I chiefly conversed), are kept in so much Ignorance, and in such Fear of entertaining the least Doubt concerning any Article of Faith (which they are made to believe is a damnable Sin) that they always turned the deaf Ear to every Thing that I offered to say against their Errors. They are often told that if they believe as the Church believes, and are obedient to their Spiritual Pastors, they shall certainly be saved; with which they content themselves, and will not make any farther Enquiry into Religion, for fear it should make them uneasy in their Minds.”

The Conclusion.

IT is now about five or six and twenty Years since I last saw *Daniel Herly*, or have had any Opportunity of making Enquiry after him; nor can I therefore say any more of him, but that he was a Man of a very regular and pious Life, and perfectly well contented with that Condition in which God's Providence had placed him. One very remarkable Thing only I must not omit to mention.

He was always very diligent, to the best of his Power, in relieving and assisting the Poor and Distressed (as I have already said) and because he had but little to give, he took this Way amongst others, of exercising his *Charity*.

Upon the late Reduction of *Ireland*, there were many poor Boys who, having lost their Parents, were forced to beg about the Streets. Some of these poor Wretches he would take into his own House, breed them up in the Fear of God, and teach them his own Trade, whereby to get their Living. The Expence indeed of this was not very great. For their Work soon paid for their Keeping. But it was no small Piece of Charity to keep such miserable Creatures from perishing. Two of these poor Boys I saw in his Room the last time that I was with him.

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F I N I S.

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OF
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Especially that which is
RELIGIOUS.

Every one shall know his own Sore, and his own Grief. 2 Chron. v. 29.

The Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmary: But a wounded Spirit who can bear? Prov. xviii. 14.

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FOR THE

CURE

OF

MELANCHOLY



REMARKS

That our Lord Jesus Christ has not only
given us a Cure for this Disease, but
also a Remedy for the Cause of it.

By the Rev. Mr. Edward Stillingfleet
in his last Sermon, on the 14th of June 1691.

LONDON:
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TO THE
READER.

***H**E who has never been troubled with Melancholy may, perhaps, think it unnecessary to prescribe any Cure for it : But they who have felt the Disease cannot but be pleased to know the Remedies, whereby it may be removed, or asswaged, and prevented from returning.*

These Remedies (or the chief of them) I have here endeavoured to collect, as far as my own Experience, and frequent Conversation with melancholy Persons, could inform me; and I hope they may be of Use to those who labour under such a heavy Affliction.

One Caution I must give to all who are inclined to Melancholy; which is, that they never indulge, but always strive against it. For, although the Beginning of it to many has been very pleasant; yet, where it prevails, it seldom fails to turn into Bitterness.

I know that melancholy Persons are not fond of, or seldom receive much Benefit from long Discourses: And therefore I have endeavoured to be as brief as may be consistent with Plainness.

SOBER



SOBER
THOUGHTS
FOR THE
CURE
OF
MELANCHOLY.

BY *Melancholy* I mean such a Disposition of the *Mind*, as renders it sorrowful, dejected, and dissatisfied, and consequently uneasy.

Melancholy, where it prevails, is a great Affliction and Trouble to the Person who labours under it: And, there-

fore, it must be of Service to Mankind to find out the true Way of preventing or curing it.

Some Persons think to drive away all *Melancholy*, by giving themselves up to what we call Diversions ; such as Hunting, Stage-plays, Balls, Dances, Musick, or any Thing that may, for the present, raise their Spirits (as they express it) and stir them up to Mirth.

That some Diversions, moderately used, are both innocent and healthful, is granted. But if a Man allows himself in such as are unbecoming a good Christian ; or if he spends so much of his Time in those that are most innocent, as to suffer himself thereby to be diverted from doing that Good in the World, of which God has made him very capable, and therefore most certainly requires it from him ; when, by Sickness or old Age, he comes to lose the Relish of these Diversions, and begins to reflect how foolishly and unprofitably, or it may be wickedly, he has spent so great a Part of his precious Time (of which he must give an Account to the righteous Judge of the World)

World) he will certainly find his *Melancholy*, his Sorrow and Anguish of Mind, to be much increased ; and would give ten thousand Worlds, if he had them, for so much Time as might enable him to repair the Loss of what he has thus squandered away.

Mirth or Diversion then (however innocent) is not the proper Remedy to prevent or cure *Melancholy*.

It is a known Maxim that, if the Cause be taken away, the Effect will cease. In order therefore to prevent or cure *Melancholy*, let us consider what are the Causes of it, and how they are to be removed.

When a Man is *melancholy*, and knows no Reason why he is so, it is justly to be presumed that the original Cause of his Disorder is not in his Mind (however that may be affected by the Disorder itself) but in his Body. Some very good Men there are, who are diligent and industrious in the Performance of every Part of their Duty ; whose Conscience does not accuse them of any Thing beyond the common Frailties of Mankind, of which also they repent
and

and beg God's Pardon as often as they find themselves guilty of them, and yet they are very much oppressed by *Melancholy*. Ask such a Man what is the Cause of this Trouble in his Mind, and, upon the strictest Examination of his whole Life, he is able to assign no Reason for it. He has sincerely repented of all his Sins, and has made ample Reparation to every Man whom he thinks he has any Way wronged; and stedfastly resolves to live virtuously and religiously during the remaining Part of his Days. His *Reason* is convinced that this is all that a good and merciful God (who gave his Son to die for us) requires from frail Man: And yet *Imagination* works so strongly in him as to lay him under dreadful Apprehensions, that his Sins are not forgiven. *Melancholy* in such Men is known to arise from an Indisposition of Body. Rational Arguments ought sometimes to be applied to such a Man's Understanding (of which by and by) but Diet, Exercise, and proper bodily Medicines, are known, by frequent Experience, to be, in such Cases, necessary.

Often,

Often, when the Body is not thus indisposed, yet great *Melancholy* seizes Men, arising from some Apprehensions that have taken Possession of the Mind: For which I see no other Remedy but rational Arguments and Discourse, by which they may be brought to have right Notions of Things, and to think and do what is proper for removing the Disorder.

Many have been very *melancholy* from an Apprehension that they are not, or possibly may not be, of the Number of God's *Eleēt*.

From some obscure Passages of the Holy Scripture, misinterpreted by some learned Men, they have formed an Opinion that God, from all Eternity, has absolutely predestinated a certain Number of Men and Women (called his *Eleēt* or Chosen) to eternal Salvation. These they conclude are certainly to be saved, and all others to be everlastingly damned; and the Fear that they are not of the Number of the *Eleēt*, is a continual Load upon their Spirits, and deprives them of all Comfort.

The

The Way to cure this *Melancholy* is to bring such Men to a right Apprehension of God's Manner of dealing with us his rational Creatures ; and thereby to let them plainly see that He has put every Man's Salvation in his own Power.

No Text of Scripture ought to be interpreted in direct Opposition to any Self-evident Truth : Nor ought any obscure Text to be interpreted in Opposition or Contradiction to other Texts that are manifestly plain. Now the clearest Reason and the most manifest Tenour of the Holy Scriptures, taken in Conjunction, do most evidently assure us of the following Truths:

That God, who is the supreme Judge, will certainly always do that which is Right :

That, however absolute his Authority may be over his Creatures, and, however He may afflict us for our own Good, if we make the right Use of Afflictions ; yet He will not inflict any Thing, by Way of *Punishment* upon any Man, except it be for some Fault, whereby

whereby the Man himself has justly deserved it :

That He never created any Man with a *Design* to make him eternally and unavoidably miserable; from whence it follows that He will not eternally damn any of *Adam's* Posterity, barely and only for the Sin of their first Parent.

Add to all this, that the Holy Scriptures give us Assurance that *Christ* died for all Men, without Exception ; that God has promised, for his Sake, to pardon the Sins of all true Penitents ; and that He requires nothing from any Man, but what is possible (and indeed easy with a willing Mind) for him to perform.

These and such like Truths are as clear as if they had been written with a Sun-beam, whereas all the Passages of Scripture, which are brought to uphold the Doctrine of absolute Predestination and Reprobation, are allowed to be obscure, hard to be understood, and capable of another Interpretation.

Let

Let then such Persons, as I am now speaking of, honestly and sincerely do all that is in their Power (and more it cannot be supposed that God will require from them) first, to know what the Will of God is, and then to perform it accordingly ; and it will soon appear to be a groundless Fear that a good and gracious God will, by any absolute Decree, exclude them from Salvation.

Others there are who are sensible that their Sins are very great and many, of which they have not truly and sincerely repented, and therefore they look upon themselves to be obnoxious to the Displeasure of God, and to eternal Damnation.

Where this is really the Case, and as long as a Man continues in these sad Circumstances, it is no Wonder that he should be exceeding *melancholy*. For it is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God.

The only Remedy for this *Melancholy* is true, sincere, and timely Repentance. Let not such a Man deceive himself by imagining that God will
 2
 pardon

pardon him, because he is sorrowful for his Sins (which he cannot but be, if he is afraid of Damnation) or because he makes fruitless Resolutions against them; or because, when he comes to lie upon a Death-bed, he bewails them, and earnestly begs Forgiveness of them: For to such imperfect Performances as these God has no where made any such Promise. True Repentance is nothing else but a real, universal, and lasting Amendment of Life; to which, and to which alone, God has promised the Forgiveness of all past Sins. Let a Man thus amend his Life, and that whilst he has a Life to live; let him, to his Power, repair all the Scandal he has given, and make all the Amends he can to every one whom he has oppressed or any Way injured; and let him continue in this good Course during the whole Remainder of his Days; and then, and then only, he will find such Comfort in the Promises of God, made and often repeated to penitent Sinners, as will free him from all *melancholy* Thoughts, and put his Mind at perfect Ease.

B

But

But some there are who, though they sincerely forsake their Sins, and diligently endeavour to live in the Practice of their whole Duty, are yet in great Fear that their Repentance is defective, and consequently their Pardon not obtained; and that for this Reason, because they think they are not sorrowful enough for their Sins. They find their Minds affected with Joy or Grief at the Good or Evil that befalls them in this World, but are sensible of no such Transports either at the Remembrance of their Sins, whereby they have offended God, or in the Performance of those Duties whereby they endeavour to please Him. Without *godly Sorrow* there can be no true Repentance; and without *Joy in the Lord* no Duty can be acceptable to Him: And because they find this *Sorrow* and this *Joy* so faint and feeble within themselves, therefore they think that they are not accepted of God; and this makes them very *melancholy*.

I shall first speak of *godly Sorrow*; and the Application to *joy in the Lord* will be very plain.

There

There is a manifest Difference between a *rational Sorrow* and a *passionate Sorrow*.

When a Man's Judgment is convinced of the Evil of his Sins, and the Displeasure he has thereby given to Almighty God ; infomuch that he heartily wishes he had never committed them, would willingly recal them, if it were in his Power, and stedfastly resolves never more to be guilty of them ; this I call a *rational Sorrow*. And without such a *Sorrow* as this for Sin, it is manifest that no Man can repent of it.

Upon this *rational Sorrow*, sometimes, but not always, there arises in the Mind a strong *Emotion* of Grief and Trouble, which often even forces Sighs from the Heart, and Tears from the Eyes ; and this may well be called a *passionate Sorrow*.

If a Sinner sets himself seriously to consider the heinous Nature of his Sins, with all the evil Consequences of them, as every Man may and ought to do, he cannot but disapprove of them, and entertain in his Mind that *rational Sorrow*

for them which I have but now described. *Rational Sorrow* for Sin is always therefore our Duty.

But a *passionate Sorrow* for Sin is not always in our Power, as depending upon the Temper and Disposition of the Man; and for this Reason is not always a Duty; however commendable upon many Occasions it may be.

True Repentance (as I have said) is nothing else but a real, universal, and lasting Amendment of Life: And if the *rational Sorrow*, which a Man has conceived for his Sins, has brought him to such an Amendment of his Life, it is true *godly Sorrow*, and consequently acceptable to God. *Godly Sorrow worketh Repentance*, says St. Paul.

After the same Manner we are to form a right Notion of *Joy in the Lord*. There is a *rational Joy*, when Reason is convinced and satisfied in the Performance of a Duty; and there is a *Passionate* [or Affectionate] *Joy*, when the Affections are brought with Pleasure into it. *Rational Joy*, or Satisfaction of Mind, is always the Effect of virtuous Practice, joined with sober and serious

rious Consideration ; which, through the Grace of God, is in every Man's Power, and therefore may be looked on as a Duty : But to bring our Affections in a lively Manner into this same Joy, although every good Man always desires it, yet the best of Men have declared that they are not always, nor it may be very often, able to effect it.

Another Cause of *Melancholy*, in many good Men, is, that they think they do not love God as well as they ought to do : They feel no Transports in their Love to God, and therefore fear that it is cool and defective.

But such Men should consider that there is a *rational Love* of God, which, the Holy Scripture informs us, consists intirely in a fixed and steddy Resolution of *keeping all his Commandments*. Where this *Resolution* is, and is carefully held to, there the Love of God is true and sincere, although the *Affections* seem not to be much moved or raised by it. If my Child (for example) is always diligent in doing whatever is pleasing and acceptable to me, he shews that he truly loves me,

although he does not fondle or caress me.

Another Thing that some complain of is, that they cannot often keep wicked, and sometimes blasphemous Thoughts, out of their Minds; which is a great Grief and Uneasiness to them.

Indeed to desire, design, or approve of any Thing that is contrary to God's Commands, is an Act of the Will, and therefore a Sin, because it is in our Power to avoid it. But barely to think of any Words or Actions, however wicked, and this without any Approbation of them, is what sometimes we cannot avoid; and therefore has nothing sinful in it. If I hear a Man swear, curse, or blaspheme, or if I see him commit Murder, it is impossible for me not to think of what I thus hear or see: But if I am so far from approving of any of these Things, that, on the contrary, I look upon them with the utmost Disapprobation and Abhorrence; I commit no Manner of Sin in thus thinking of them. Our Actions, Words, Desires, Designs, and

Approbations, are in our own Power ; and therefore we are certainly accountable for them. But whether we will or no, Thoughts will often arise in our Minds, sometimes from external Objects, and sometimes from the inward Motions of the Mind itself ; and if we take all the Care we can so to curb and regulate them, as that they have no evil Influence upon the Will, which through the Grace of God is within our Power, they cannot involve us in any Guilt ; and therefore, however they may often be troublesome, ought not to make us *melancholy*.

Many well-disposed Persons are much grieved for that, in the midst of their most solemn Devotions to God, idle and impertinent, and sometimes evil Thoughts arise in their Minds, and divert that Attention, which they are sensible they ought constantly to give to what they are about, upon all such Occasions : And this, as they apprehend, is to *draw nigh to God with their Lips, when their Hearts are far from him.*

Prepare

Prepare your Hearts unto the Lord, to serve him. Keep thy Foot (that is, be watchful over thyself) *when thou goest into the House of the Lord*; into the Church, thy Closet, or any Place where thou proposhest to offer up thy Devotions to God. He who neglects to do this (which I fear is the Case of many) offers great Contempt to the Divine Majesty.

But when we have taken the best Care we can to keep ourselves attentive in our Prayers and Devotions, foolish Thoughts will sometimes suddenly and unavoidably arise in our Minds: Concerning which I must say the same as I have but now done of wicked Thoughts upon other Occasions. Such Thoughts are like Flies, which in hot Weather are very troublesome to us. We must strive to drive them away as well as we can; but sometimes it is impossible wholly to get rid of them; and that which is impossible God will not require from us.

A Man's *Heart* is then only said to be *far from God*, when he is careless

less or negligent in the Performance of his Duty. And if, after our greatest Care and Diligence, some Frailties and Weaknesses stick to us, against which we constantly and earnestly strive, but cannot wholly overcome; our good and gracious God will not lay them to our Charge. *He knows our Frame, He remembers we are but Dust*; and therefore as *a Father pitieth his Children, even so bath the Lord Compassion upon those that fear him*; who are not stubbornly disobedient, but to their Power strive to serve Him.

Some there are who earnestly endeavour to perform every Part of their Duty, and yet are very *melancholy*, because they apprehend that they have not true Faith. *Without Faith it is impossible to please God*; and where there is not a firm Belief of those Truths, which God has made known to Mankind, there can be no true Faith. Now, because these Men find in themselves some speculative Doubts or Hesitations, arising from Weakness of Judgment, concerning the Truth of Religion,

Religion, or some of the great Articles of it; they are under great Fear that their Faith is not true, at least not as firm as they think it ought to be; and consequently that they neither do nor can *please God*: Which has been a very afflicting Consideration to some *melancholy* Persons.

The Tree is known by its Fruit. A good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit, says Christ. The Fruit of Faith is plenty of good Works. I will shew thee my Faith by my Works, says St. James. What these good Works are, is sufficiently known: That, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World. If a Tree appears to be somewhat loose at the Root, yet brings forth much good Fruit, it is certainly a good Tree, because it fully answers the End of such a Tree: And, however weak a Man's Faith may be, yet if it effectually prompts him to be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, it is certainly true Faith, for the same Reason, because it fully answers the End of such Faith, which
is

is not Speculation, but right Practice. St. *Paul* sufficiently gives us to understand that a Man who is *weak in the Faith*, although he is not to engage in *doubtful Disputations*, yet may be a good Christian, and fit to be *received* into the Church, and consequently to continue a faithful Member of it. *Rom. xiv. 1.*

Melancholy has carried some Persons so far, as to beget in them an Apprehension that they had committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost, which our Saviour declares shall never be pardoned. But, in the whole Scripture, it is not a Sin against the Holy Ghost, but only *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost* that is declared to be unpardonable: Which same *Blasphemy* was (as always appears) the ascribing of our blessed Saviour's miraculous casting out of evil Spirits to the Assistance which he received from *the Prince of the Devils*, and that by those who were Eyewitnesses of his Miracles. Every Sin which a Man commits, in Opposition to the Motions of God's Spirit within him, may in some Sense be called a
Sin

Sin against the Holy Ghost: But it is this same *Blasphemy* alone that is pronounced to be unpardonable: And whether a Man who never saw the Miracles of *Christ* (as the Scribes and Pharisees did) can at this Time be unpardonably guilty of it, may very reasonably be doubted.

Many, who are of a tender Frame of Mind, are much cast down, when they reflect upon all the several Sorts of Evils that have fallen out among Mankind, in all Ages of the World, to this present Time, and seem likely to continue for Ages to come. To enumerate the Particulars would be an endless Attempt: But take them in gross. The great spreading of Wickedness, Idolatry, and Infidelity; the Wars, Slaughters, and Massacres; the Shipwrecks, Famines, and Pestilences; the Downfal of Empires, Kingdoms, and Commonwealths, with all the publick and private Calamities, in which every Man has some Share: All these Things seem to shew that Mankind, in this World, is, and always was, in a very uncertain and miserable Condition;

tion ; and what Man is there, who has not a Heart of Iron, that can be otherwise than sorrowful upon the Observation and Remembrance of all these sad Things ?

But, above all, the frequent Prosperity and Triumph of the Wicked, and the great Oppression of the Poor and Innocent, has brought some, even good Men, almost to a Despondency of the Divine Providence. *My Feet were almost gone, my Steps bad well nigh slipt ; —when I saw the Prosperity of the Wicked : Psal. lxxiii. 2. Wherefore doth the Wicked prosper ? &c. Jer. xii. 1.*

For this Dejection of Mind our Blessed Saviour has prescribed a sure Remedy, if we will but take care to make the right Use of it : *In your Patience possess ye your Souls. Luke xxi. 19.* God is infinitely wise and powerful, as well as good and gracious : And since He has thought fit to create this World, no Doubt can be made but that He governs and conducts the Affairs of it by a wise and unerring Providence ; although to us, shallow Mortals, *His Ways, or very many of them, are past finding*

finding out. This Life is a Time of Trial, but of short Continuance; and, therefore, the Calamities of it may be the better born. We may often wonder at the Conduct of the wisest and best King; whereas, if we knew the Reason of it, we should fully approve of it. God has appointed a Life to come, in which *He will judge the World in Righteousness*; and then it will appear that *the Judge of all the Earth doth right*. Much more might more largely be said upon this Subject: But if this little, that I have said, be seriously put together, and duly weighed by a conscientious Man, it may well compose his Mind, make him wait for his final Reward in the Life to come, and, in the mean time, with Patience, and an entire Resignation of himself, and every other Thing, to the good Providence of God, bear all the Evils and Calamities of this World, which he is not able to remedy.

To sum up all in few Words: Mirth, Pastimes, and Diversions, even those which in themselves are innocent, although, for the present, they may be
some

some Ease or Relief to *Melancholy*, yet they will not cure it, or hinder it from returning again, perhaps, with more Violence than before. If *Melancholy*, either in the Whole or in Part, arises from the Constitution of Body, proper Diet, Exercise, and Medicines ought to be made use of: But, as far as it is seated in the Mind, it is only to be removed by rational Arguments and Considerations, which alone can work upon the Understanding. Let a Man sincerely repent of all his Sins, and be watchful to amend his Life, and perform his Duty in every Instance: Let him *exercise himself always to have a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men*; and then, and only then, whatever befalls him, in this uncertain Life, he will find true Peace with God, and solid Joy and Comfort in his own Mind. *Our Rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but, by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World.* 2 Cor. i. 12.

*Why art thou cast down, O my Soul?
and why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise
Him, who is the Health of my Counte-
nance, and my God: Psal. xlii. 11. The
same Thing had before been said, v. 5.
and is again repeated, Psal. xliii. 5.
for which Reason it ought the more
to be taken Notice of.*

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1 Cor. iii. 2. *I have fed you with Milk.*
Prov. xxii. 6. *Train up a Child in the Way he should*
go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

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THE former Part of this Dialogue, containing an Account of the Nature and Design of our Office of Confirmation, is easy to be understood, but needs not to be got by Heart.

The latter part of it, which explains the meaning of our Church-Catechism, may be got by Heart with little Difficulty; and will, I hope, be of good Use. A Grain of Mustard-seed (as our Saviour speaks) may grow up into a large Plant.

They who are illiterate ought, as well as others, to take care of their Salvation. For which Reason I have made choice of such a Person, and have put such Words into her Mouth as are easy and familiar. And if this short Abstract proves an Introduction to Christian Knowledge and Practice, I have my End.

Wm Stationary Go.

Edw. Tuam,

A
DISCOURSE
ON
Confirmation, &c.

Sarah.

ON Sunday last, you were pleased to give publick notice in the Church, That, on that Day Month, the Bishop would be with us, to perform the Office of *Confirmation*, for this, and the near adjoining Parishes: And that therefore all of your Parish, who desired to be confirmed, should in the mean time come to you to be examined and instructed, that you might enter down their Names in Writing, for that Purpose. I am one of your Parishoners who desire to be confirmed, and in order thereunto to be examined and instructed.

Minister. Have you considered what is the Meaning and Design of this Office of *Confirmation*.

Sar. I am so unhappy as not to be able to read: But I often get one of my Fellow-Servants to read to me; and upon hearing the Office of *Confirmation* (as it stands in our Common-Prayer Book) thus read, I think I understand the meaning of it. We are generally

rally baptized, and thereby admitted as Members of the Church of Christ, in the time of our Infancy. Our Godfathers and Godmothers (as they are called) do then vow and promise, in our Names, and for us, respectively, That we will *renounce the Devil and all his Works, the Poms and Vanity of this wicked World, and all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh: That we will believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith: And that we will keep God's holy Will and Commandments.* Now, since we are incapable of understanding this Vow or Promise, at the time of the first making of it, it is absolutely necessary that, when we come to Years of Discretion, we should ratify and take it upon our selves, and fulfil it to the best of our Power; or else we cannot hope for eternal Salvation, which God has promised only to true Believers and good Livers. The Bishop therefore, as God's Minister, demands of all those who are to be confirmed, whether each of them does for himself thus ratify and take upon himself to keep that Vow and Promise, which was made in his Name at his Baptism; and upon their declaring that they do so, he proceeds, with Prayer and laying on of his Hands, to beg of God that he would defend and strengthen all and each of them by his Grace and holy Spirit, that in the Course of their Lives, they may effectually perform that Vow and Promise which they now take upon themselves. This laying on of Hands, with

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with Prayer, by the Bishop, we call by the Name of *Confirmation*; the intent of it being, that by the Grace of God's holy Spirit, which is thus prayed for, the Youth should be confirmed and strengthened in their holy Resolution of performing their baptismal Vow, which they then take upon themselves, unto their Lives-End.

Min. Do you think it necessary to your Salvation that you should be after this manner confirmed.

Sar. I do not apprehend that there is the like necessity for it, as there is or was that I should have been baptized: Baptism being expressly commanded by *Christ*, *Mat* 28. 19. But no such *Command* appearing for our manner of *Confirmation*. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*, says *Christ*, *Mar.* 16. 16. He therefore who so believes the Gospel, as to lead his life according to it, and has been admitted into the Church of *Christ* by Baptism, seems to me to be in a state of Salvation, altho' things may have so fallen out, as that he never has been *confirmed* after our manner. And tho' Baptism it self be expressly commanded (for which reason it ought never to be neglected) yet I do not think but that in some cases a Man may be saved without it; provided that he himself is not the wilful cause of his want of it. The Case of the Thief upon the Cross (*Luke* 23. 43.) may appear to be very extraordinary, and therefore not pro-

per to be urged : But I have been informed that, in the Primitive times of Persecution, some, who had sincerely embraced the Christian Faith, suffered Martyrdom for it before they had the opportunity of being baptized ; of whose Salvation yet no do doubt has been made. Some Children are still-born, or otherwise die unbaptized ; and some persons are brought up in invincible error concerning the necessity of Baptism : Nor can I think that God, who is infinitely good and gracious, will exclude any one from Salvation for such a thing as cannot be laid to his Charge as a fault of his own. But if a man be convinced, or has good Reason to believe that *Christ* has commanded all Members of his Church to be baptized, and yet neglects it, and much more if he despises it ; such a man is guilty of a most sinful Presumption, and most justly to be condemned for it. From our Saviour's own Words, *Teach all Nations, baptizing them, &c.* Mat. 28. 19. and *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,* Mar. 16. 16. we may learn that by Baptism we are received as visible Members of *Christ's* Church : And all sober Christians agree that a Man, who is known never to have been baptized, ought not to be admitted to the Holy Communion. But, by the Rubric at the end of our *Order of Confirmation*, it appears that if a Man be *ready and desirous to be confirmed*, but wants an opportunity for it ; he may be *admitted*

to the holy Communion. Which shews that, in the Judgment of our Church, a Man who is not confirmed may yet be in a State of Salvation.

Min. If *Confirmation* is not necessary to your Salvation, why are you so desirous of it?

Sar. I take it to be useful to very good Purposes, and therefore not to be neglected, where it may be had; altho' it be not necessary in the same Sense as Christ's Command has made Baptism to be.

Min. Give me your Thoughts of this matter.

Sar. I will, according as I have learnt. I have heard the necessity of Baptism enforced by many passages of Holy Scripture; most of which have been read to me out of a little Book called, *The word of God the best Guide*; Part 2. Chap. 20. As to what relates to *Confirmation*, I have heard it plainly suggested from two or three passages of the *New Testament*; particularly from *Acts* 8. 15, 16, 17, and *Acts* 19. 6. that the Apostles used to lay their Hands upon Persons who had been baptized, and to pray for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. And altho' the miraculous Gifts, which thereupon followed, have long since ceased; yet since all Christians ought to believe that *it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do, of His good Pleasure*; *Philip*. 2. 13. and that therefore the Grace and Assistance of his
Holy

Holy Spirit is to be sought for, in order to our leading a Holy Life ; I cannot but conclude that this laying on of Hands upon Persons, that have been baptized, together with Prayer to God, for their growth in Grace, (which we call *Confirmation*) is a Godly custom, and ever fit to be continued in the Christian Church ; altho' I do not take upon me to condemn those Churches, where it is not administred in the same manner, as it is in ours. I own my self bound to believe and to do as my Godfathers and Godmothers have promised for me : And this because it is God's Command that I should so believe and do ; without which Command of God, their Promise or Vow made in my Name, could lay no obligation upon me. This obligation under which I am laid, not by my Godfathers and Godmothers, but by God himself, I ought often to think of, and endeavour to fulfill : And it is most highly proper that I should own all this before God, the Bishop, who is his Minister, and the Congregation who are his People, when I come to be *confirmed*.

Min. All that you are thus required to believe and to do is comprised in our excellent Church Catechism. Can you repeat the Catechism ?

Sar. I cannot exactly repeat all the words of it. But I hope I understand the meaning of it all,

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Min. I shall therefore examine you touching the meaning of the Catechism only, without insisting strictly upon all the words of it. What benefit was it, or is it to you, that you were baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

Sar. Great benefit: For, by God's Blessing on his own Ordinance of Baptism, I was thereby made a Member of the Church of Christ, a Child of God, an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Min. What must you do that you may not be deprived of these great Benefits and Advantages?

Sar. I must renounce the Devil, and all manner of Sin and Wickedness: I must believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith: And I must give obedience to all God's Commandments, thro' the whole course of my Life.

Min. Rehearse the Articles of the Christian Faith.

Sar. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth: And in *Jesus Christ* His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under *Pontius Pilate*, was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into Hell: The third day he rose again from the Dead: He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right Hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall
come

Min.

come to judge the quick and the Dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholick Church; the Communion of Saints; the forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life everlasting. *Amen.*

Min. What do you hereby chiefly and principally learn to believe?

Sar. I learn to believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; in whose name I was baptized.

Min. What do you believe of God the Father?

Sar. I believe that by his Almighty power He made me and all the World.

Min. What do you believe of God the Son?

Sar. I believe that He took our nature upon Him, died for the Sins of all Mankind, rose again, and ascended into Glory: And that He is to be our Judge at the last great Day.

Min. What do you believe of God the Holy Ghost?

Sar. I believe that by His Grace and Assistance, all faithful Members of *Christ's* Church are enabled to lead Holy Lives.

Min. What do you believe of *Christ's* Church?

Sar. I believe that it is a Catholic or universal Church; and not confined to any one Nation or People: That every true Member of this Church is holy: That they all ought to maintain Communion and Fellowship together

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gether in *Christ Jesus*; and. that so doing they shall obtain Forgiveness of their Sins, and everlasting Happiness in the Life to come.

Min. How many Commandments has God given us?

Sar. Chiefly ten; being the same which God himself spake unto the Children of *Israel*.

Min. Are God's Commandments given to us as Rules for our Words and Actions alone?

Sar. They ought also to be the Rules of our inward Desires and Inclinations.

Min. The first Commandment is in these Words: *Thou shalt have none other God but me.* What does this Commandment require from us?

This Commandment requires that we should love, fear, and honour God above all Things, and give religious Worship to none but himself.

Min. The second Commandment is in these Words: *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven Image, nor the Likeness of any Thing that is in Heaven above, or in the Earth beneath, or in the Water under the Earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them.* What does this Commandment require from us?

Sar. This Commandment requires that we should make no Picture or Image of God, who is a Spirit, John 4, 34. whom no Man hath seen nor can see. 1 Tim. 6, 16. It also requires

requires that we should not worship or bow down to any Picture or Image whatsoever.

Min. The third Commandment is this: *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.* What does this Commandment require?

Sar. It requires that we should honour and reverence the Name of God; and never profane it, either by foolish talking, or vain or false swearing or cursing.

Min. The fourth Commandment is this: *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-Day.* What does this Commandment require?

Sar. It requires that we should worship God, not only privately, but publicly also: And that one Day in seven should more especially be set apart for his Worship and Service; which, amongst us Christians, is *the Lord's-Day.*

Min. The fifth Commandment is, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother.* What does this Commandment require?

Sar. It requires that we should love, honour, and obey our Parents, and all our Superiors in Church and State.

Min. The sixth Commandment is, *Thou shalt do no Murder.* What is hereby requir'd?

Sar. It is required that we should abstain from Murder, Hatred, Malice, and Revenge; and that we should be kindly affectioned one towards another.

Min. The seventh Commandment is, *Thou shalt*

shalt not commit Adultery. What is hereby required?

Sar. It is required that we should abstain from Adultery, Whoredom, and all manner of Lewdness in Thought, Word, and Deed: And that we should carefully keep our Bodies in Temperance, Sobriety, and Chastity.

Min. The eighth Commandment is, *Thou shalt not steal.* What is hereby required?

Sar. It is required that we should not steal, cheat, or defraud; but honestly give to every Man whatever is due to him.

Min. The ninth Commandment is, *Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour.* What is hereby required?

Sar. It is required that we should bear false Witness against no Man; but abstain from evil speaking, lying and slandering: And that we should be true and sincere in all we say.

Min. The tenth Commandment is, *Thou shalt not covet.* What is hereby required?

Sar. It is required that every one should be content with what is his own; and not desire that which belongs to any other Man, without making him full Reparation for it.

Min. Give me the Substance and Sum of all God's Commandments in few Words.

Sar. It is to love God above all other Things; and to love our Neighbour as sincerely as we love our selves.

Min. Are you able to keep these Commandments?

B

Sar.

Sar. Not without God's Grace and Assistance, which I must continually pray for.

Min. Say the Lord's Prayer.

Sar. Our Father which art in Heaven : Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Min. Do you pray for your self alone?

Sar. I pray for all Mankind, together with my self.

Min. What mean you when you say, *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

Sar. I give Glory to God, as being our Supreme Lord and heavenly Father.

Min. What mean you when you say, *hallowed be thy Name?*

Sar. I pray that God's holy Name may be sanctified and revered throughout the World.

Min. What mean you, when you say, *Thy Kingdom come?*

Sar. I pray that all Men may become obedient unto God as their eternal King ; and that we all may be Partakers of his heavenly Kingdom.

Min. What mean you when you say, *Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.*

Sar.

Sar. I pray, that we may all be obedient to God's Will here on Earth, as the holy Angels and blessed Spirits are in Heaven.

Min. What mean you when you say, *Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

Sar. I pray that God would give us the Necessaries of Life, of which *Bread* is reckoned to be the Chief.

Min. What mean you when you say, *Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us?*

Sar. I pray that, as we forgive all others who have wronged us, so God would forgive us our Sins, whereby we have offended him.

Min. What mean you when you say, *Lead us not into Temptation?*

Sar. I pray that God would preserve us from every Thing that may tempt or draw us into Sin.

Min. What mean you when you say, *Deliver us from evil?*

Sar. I pray that God would deliver us from all Calamities and Afflictions of this World: But above all, from the evil of Sin, and the consequent evil of eternal Damnation.

Min. What mean you when you say, *Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory for ever and ever?*

Sar. I give Praise and Glory to God for the Greatness of his Power and Majesty.

Min. Do you distinctly mean all these Things as often as you say the Lord's Prayer?

Sar. I pray God to enable me so to do : For the best Words in Prayer will not be accepted by him without their proper meaning.

Min. Why do you say *Amen* at the End both of the *Creed* and the *Lord's Prayer*.

Sar. *Amen* signifies as much as *Verily*, *Truly*, or *So be it* : And I pronounce it at the End both of my *Creed* and *Prayer*, to shew that my Heart agrees with my Mouth.

Min. How many Divine Ordinances are there, which we call *Sacraments*?

Sar. For what Reason it is that any of God's Ordinances are called *Sacraments*, I think it not necessary for me to enquire. Concerning this, it is enough for me to know that *Baptism* and the Holy Communion, or *Supper of the Lord* (which we call the two *Sacraments*) are appointed by *Christ* as means of our Salvation.

Min. What is the outward and visible Part of *Baptism*?

Sar. Water, wherein *Christ* has commanded all Nations to be baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Min. What is the inward and invisible Part of it?

Sar. God's Grace and Blessing attending his own Ordinance ; whereby we are cleansed from the Pollution of Sin, and enabled to live in Obedience to him.

Min. What is required from Persons to be baptized?

Sar.

Sar. Faith and Repentance.

Min. Why then are Infants baptized, who are incapable both of believing and repenting?

Sar. They are bound to believe and repent as soon as they become capable: Of which their Parents and Sureties, who bring them to Baptism, are obliged to take all due Care.

Min. Why was the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* ordained?

Sar. It was ordained for the continual Remembrance of the Sacrifice of the Death of *Christ*, and of the Benefits which we receive thereby.

Min. What is the outward and visible Part of the *Lord's Supper*?

Sar. Bread and Wine: Both which *Christ* has commanded to be received.

Min. What is the inward and invisible Part of it?

Sar. The Communion or Participation of the Body and Blood of *Christ*; which by Faith we spiritually receive in the *Lord's Supper*; and thereby are made Partakers of the Benefits of his Death and Passion.

Min. What Preparation is required of those who come to the *Lord's Supper*?

Sar. True Repentance for all past Sins; with a stedfast Purpose of leading a Holy Life for the Time to come: Faith in *Jesus Christ*, with a thankful Remembrance of his Death; and Charity towards all Mankind;

not only Friends, but also Strangers and Enemies.

Min. Will you often thus prepare your self for the *Lord's Supper*?

Sar. I hope I shall, through the Grace and assistance of God.

Min. How came you by all this Instruction?

Sar. My Parents tho' poor and illiterate, were virtuous and religious, and taught me by word of Mouth as much as they could of true Religion. They carried me with them constantly to the Church, where I was always attentive to the whole Service and Sermon, and to those plain Explications of the Church Catechism which often were made by the Minister. I took all the Opportunities I could get of hearing the Bible read; and particularly the four Gospels. I also got two or three other plain small Books of Religion read to me: Out of all which I always endeavoured to remember as much as I could: Although I am often at a Loss for Words to express even such Things as I understand. To all this I add my constant Prayers to God, that I may *know him and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*; which *Christ* has told us is *Life eternal*. John 17. 3.

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In the *Help* which I presumed to offer to you for the *Devout Performance of private Prayer*, I gave you this Advice, that in the repeating or reading of the *Form of Prayer* which I sent you, and more especially the *Lords Prayer*; at the End of each Sentence or Period you should make a little Pause, and recollect what it is that you have last said; for which I gave you my Reason. Now the better to enable you to do this, I here send you the *Lord's Prayer*, and under each Sentence have subjoined such
A Thoughts

Thoughts as are proper for you to entertain in your Mind as you proceed.

Our Father which art in Heaven :

O Great, Glorious, Almighty Lord God, and most gracious heavenly Father.

Hallowed be thy Name :

May thy great Name, Glory, Majesty, and Goodness be acknowledged, honoured, sanctified and adored throughout the whole Universe.

Thy Kingdom come :

May the whole Universe, and more especially all Mankind submit to thee as our supreme Lord and King. May thy Kingdom of Grace rule in all our Hearts ; and may we all be Partakers of thy Kingdom of eternal Glory.

Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven :

May all Mankind, upon the Face of the whole Earth, be freely and readily obedient and submissive to thy Will, as the blessed Angels and Spirits are in Heaven.

Give us this Day our Daily Bread :

Give us Food, and the Necessaries of Life to sustain us ; that we may be enabled to perform our whole Duty.

Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that Trespas against us :

Incline

Incline all our Hearts to sincere mutual Charity, Forbearance, and Forgiveness one of another: And forgive us our Sins as we forgive each other.

Lead us not into Temptation:

Keep us out of the Way of all Temptations to Sin ; teach us as much as is possible to avoid them, and effectually enable us at all times to resist and overcome them.

But deliver us from Evil:

Deliver us from Evils of all Sorts ; and more especially from the Evil of Sin, and that of thy Wrath and eternal Damnation.

For thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, forever and ever. Amen.

All Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty, Dominion and Goodness belong unto thee alone, O God ; and therefore to thee alone I offer up these my Prayers, Praises and Thanksgivings, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord ; to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all Praise and Glory, World without end. Amen.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with us all. Amen. 1 Cor. xiii. 14.

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ON THE

DOCTRINE

OF

P R E D E S T I N A T I O N .

N. B. *The following Answer having fully satisfied an honest Man much perplexed about the Doctrine of Predestination; I publish it, in hope it may be alike satisfactory to others.*

TWO Questions proposed.

Qu. 1. Is there any such Thing as *Predestination*? And what is it?

Qu. 2. Does the Salvation of a Man, suppose of *William*, depend upon God's Predestination, or upon his own Obedience?

Answer. As far as clear Reason (which is *the Candle of the Lord*; Prov. xx. 27.) or the revealed Word of God (which is *a Light unto our Path*, Psal. cxix. 105.) as far as these or either of them will plainly guide us; so far we may safely carry on our Enquiries. But to search farther into such Things as God has kept *secret*, is a great Presumption. Deut. xxix. 29. Nor has God made the Knowledge of any of these *secret Things* necessary to our Salvation.

God's

God's *Predestination* is not barely his *Forefight* that such a Thing will be; but his *Decree* that it shall be. To *foresee* a Thing is not to *decree* it.

God decrees some Things *absolutely*. Thus he decreed to send Christ into the World. Some Things he decrees *conditionally*. Thus he decrees that *William* shall be saved, on *Condition* that *William* be truly obedient. *This do and thou shalt live.* Luke, x. 28.

God foresaw, from all Eternity, whether *William* would sincerely perform this Condition. Our Foreknowledge is short and limited: But God's is infinite, unlimited and to us incomprehensible.

If a Man sincerely performs the Conditions of his Salvation to the End of his Life, he will be saved, notwithstanding his Errors or Ignorance touching the Doctrine of *Predestination*: The Knowledge of which is not necessary to Salvation. Very good Christians have held different Opinions about it.

Our good Works yield no Profit or Benefit to God; who, from all Eternity, has been and is forever infinitely happy in himself and his own unlimited Perfections. *Can a Man be profitable unto God?* Job. xxii. 2. Therefore, properly speaking, no
Man

Man can merit any good Thing from God. *Eternal Life is the Gift of God:* Rom. vi. 23. Wherewith he thinks fit, of his own Accord, to reward Man's Holiness. Now a *Gift* intirely depends upon the Free-Will of the Giver. But this Reward being promised to us only upon a Condition on our Part to be performed; our Salvation may, in some Sense, be said to depend upon our selves.

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Virtue and Piety.*

A

S E R M O N, &c.

PSALM X. 4.

God is not in all his Thoughts.



T the second Verse of this Psalm, the holy Psalmist gives us a Description of the Disposition and Actions of a wicked Man. *The Wicked boasteth of his Heart's Desire, and blesteth the Covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth. The Wicked, through the Pride of his Countenance, will not seek after God:* With more to the like Purpose, to the End of the eleventh Verse. Now if we demand what can be the Cause or Reason of so much Wickedness in a frail mortal Man? The Words of my Text plainly point it out to us.

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God is not in all his Thoughts. In the Course of his Impiety, Injustice, and Debauchery, he never seriously thinks of *God*, and of the Account which he must, one Day, give of himself to him: And therefore he throws off all Restraint of *Conscience*; and gives himself full Liberty in every Thing that is evil, as far as he can hope to escape with Impunity in this World.

By the Rule of Contraries; if we demand what is the Cause or Reason why a truly good Man takes so much Care, in the whole Course of his Life, to *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, and *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*, (Tit. ii. 12.) we may well resolve it all into this, That he acts by a quite contrary Principle to that of the wicked Man. We may truly say of a righteous Man, that *God is in all his Thoughts*: Upon all Occasions, he *remembers his Creator*, (Eccl. xii. 1.) and calls to mind that for all his Thoughts, Words, and Actions, *God will bring him into Judgment*, (Eccl. xi. 9.) Which is such an effectual Restraint upon him, that he will not deliberately do a wicked Action, or cherish an ungodly Inclination; altho' he were sure that, in this World, he should never be called to any Account for it. From whence I lay down this Proposition, as the Subject of my following Discourse.

That

That to have God in all our Thoughts, in such a Manner as we ought, is the Root and Spring of all true Piety and Virtue.

And that I may, at the same time, both prove this Proposition and make the proper Use of it, I shall endeavour to shew,

First, With what Preparation and Disposition of Heart and Mind, we ought ever to think of God.

Secondly, What sort of Thoughts we ought always to have of him.

Thirdly, That these Thoughts, duly imprinted on our Minds, will most certainly have a very good Influence to bring us to lead our whole Lives according to the Rules of true Virtue and Piety.

And, because the Use of any general Rule is best seen by the Application of it to particular Cases, I shall, in the

Fourth and last Place, mention some particular Occasions on which we ought more especially to call God into our Thoughts, and shew the great Use of doing so in order to preserve and improve our Virtue.

First then, let us consider with what Preparation and Disposition of Heart and Mind, we ought ever to think of God. I mention this in the first Place, because if there be not such a due Preparation and Disposition within us, all our Thoughts of God will be to

no other Purpose, than to increase our Condemnation.

Our blessed Saviour, in one of his Parables (*Luke viii. 5, &c.*) observes, that if the Ground be not fit to receive the Seed, the Labour of the Sower is lost: And if there be not *an honest and good Heart* to receive the Word of God, it *brings no Fruit to Perfection*. And for this Reason it is that we are required to *prepare our Hearts unto the Lord*, 1 Sam. vii. 3. and to *prepare the Way of the Lord*, Matt. iii. 3. That is to say, to keep our Minds in such a Disposition as to be fit to entertain the Thoughts of Religion, to the Glory of God and our own Salvation.

When a good Subject is in the Presence of his Prince, a good Son in the Presence of his Father, or a good Servant in the Presence of his Lord or Master; it is most certainly his Duty to behave himself with a becoming Decency and Respect to him who is his Superior, and vested with Authority over him. Now, altho' we are always in the Presence of God (who is present in all Places) yet when we call him into our Thoughts, we do, as it were, place ourselves more immediately in his Presence. Since then God is the eternal King of the whole Universe, our heavenly Father, and our supreme Lord and Master (as by and by we shall more fully see) surely whenever we think of him, we ought

ought to do it with that Seriousness and Reverence that is suitable to the Greatness of his Majesty, his Goodness to us, and the absolute Power and Dominion which he has over us and all other Things. Every thing that is profane or wicked ought *at all times* to be banished from our Thoughts, Words, and Actions: But when we receive God into our Thoughts, we ought, for that time, to lay aside even such Things as are trifling or frivolous, *Holy and Reverend is his Name*, Psal. cxi. 9. And therefore we ought always to think of him *with Reverence and godly Fear*, Heb. xii. 28. Which if at any time we fail to do, well may he expostulate with us, in the Words of the Prophet, *A Son honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Master: If then I be a Father, where is mine Honour? If I be a Master, where is my Fear? saith the Lord of Hosts*, Mal. i. 6.

But against this there are some prophane Men who make, as they think, a strong Objection; which I chuse here to answer in the beginning of my Discourse, that it may not lye as an Obstruction in our Way as we proceed. If (say they) we have *God in all our Thoughts*, and always think of him after this reverential Manner; the Consequence is that we must be always in Awe, always in Fear; which must needs banish all Mirth and Sprightliness, and make our whole
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Lives melancholy and uncomfortable. This is their great Objection.

There is indeed a sort of wild, extravagant, and even ungodly Mirth (to which some Men are addicted) that is altogether unbecoming a rational Creature. Of this King *Solomon*, in his Search after Happiness, once made a Trial. *I said in mine Heart* (says he) *Go to, I will prove thee with Mirth; therefore enjoy Pleasure: And behold this also is Vanity. I said of Laughter, it is mad; and of Mirth, what doth it?* Eccl. ii. 1, 2. And in another Place, he says, *As the crackling of Thorns under a Pot, so is the Laughter of the Fool*, Eccl. vii. 6. It makes a Noise for a while, and soon vanishes. And again he tells us, that *the End of that Mirth is Heaviness*, Prov. xiv. 13. If this be that Mirth of which a Man is fond, I grant indeed that it is inconsistent with the true Fear of God: And for this, amongst other Reasons, I recommend it to him often to think of God, that he may banish and lay aside all such Mirth as this.

But it is a great Mistake to think that Mirth, or a chearful Temper of Mind, as long as it is kept within the Bounds of Innocence, is any way inconsistent with the Fear of God, or the Seriousness of a religious Life. Our great Creator *knows our Frame, he remembreth that we are but Dust*, Psal.

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Pfal. ciii. 13. weak and frail Creatures. And therefore he has not forbid us, when we are weary, to refresh ourselves with any thing that is harmless; as Mirth, at seasonable Times, most certainly is, since it is not forbidden by any of God's Laws. God *meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh Righteousness*, Isai. lxiv. 5. Solomon tells us, that *it is from the Hand of God, that a Man should eat and drink, and make his Soul enjoy Good in his Labour*, Eccl. ii. 24. And that as there is *a Time to weep and mourn*, so is there also *a Time to laugh*, and even *to dance*; (provided still that Men keep within the Bounds of Prudence and Sobriety; which is always to be understood) Eccl. iii. 4. In divers Places of *Holy Scripture*, we find rejoicing, feasting, and making merry, not only not forbidden, but even recommended: Nor did our blessed Saviour himself refuse to be present at a *Marriage Feast* (which usually is no melancholy Entertainment) and to work a Miracle to supply the Guests with *Wine* when it was wanting: As you may read at large, *John* ii. 1, &c. No Man is so well qualified to be truly chearful and innocently merry, as he who knows himself to be at Peace with God, and keeps a *Conscience void of Offences towards God and towards Men*, (*Acts* xxiv. 16.) This alone is that *merry Heart* which makes the *Countenance truly chearful*,
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and gives a Man *a continual Feast*, Prov. xv. 13, 15.

It is indeed hardly to be supposed that a wicked Man, who continues in his Sins, can at any time think of God, without the utmost Dread and Horror. For *it is a fearful Thing* for such a Man to fall into the Hands of the living God, Heb. x. 31. And this may well strike a Damp upon all his Mirth. But a good Man, who has made his Peace with his heavenly Father through *Jesus Christ*, always thinks of him with Joy and Delight; and, even in the midst of his innocent Mirth, often lifts up his Thoughts with Comfort to him.

This Answer to the prophane Man's Objection will receive much greater and stronger Light from what is to follow in the Sequel of this Discourse. But yet I have chosen here to make it, that the Objection, which of itself is too apt to arise in our Minds, may be no hindrance to us in giving due Attention to what is proper to be said concerning our constant thinking of God. I proceed therefore to the

Second Point proposed; which was to shew what sort of Thoughts we ought always to have of him.

It is a general Rule, allowed of as most reasonable by all Men, that we ought, as far as we are able, to think every Thing to be
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such as in Truth and Reality it is. False Notions of Things always beget Errors in our Minds, which often mislead us in our Practice: Whereas from right Notions nothing but Truth can arise; and Truth can never lead us into a wrong Way. The old *Heathens* had by Nature some Knowledge of God: But they gave way to many false Notions of him, which their own Reason would have sufficiently confuted, if they would soberly have hearkened to it. These false Notions soon betrayed them into monstrous Errors both in Opinion and Practice. *They changed the Glory of the uncorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts and creeping Things.* And when once they had given themselves up to *Idolatry*, all manner of Licentiousness and Wickedness found a ready Entertainment among them; as *St. Paul* at large sets the Matter forth, *Rom. i. 16, &c.* If therefore we would so think of God, as thereby to be rightly influenced in the Performance of our Duty, and consequently to enjoy Peace of Conscience here, and attain to Salvation hereafter; our first Care must be to have just and right Thoughts and Notions of him.

But the Nature, Perfection, and Attributes of God being all *infinite*, and the Understanding of Man not only *finite*, but also of small Extent, with respect even to the Knowledge of the Creatures themselves; it is impossible
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for us to form a complete and adequate Notion of what God is. *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea, Job xi. 7, &c.* All therefore which here we are able to do, and consequently all that, in this Case, is or can be required from us, is to receive that Knowledge of God, which he has been pleased to offer to us, partly by *Reason*, and more fully by his *Holy Word*; and by Meditation to imprint it as deeply as we can in our Minds. If then we carefully attend to the Dictates of calm and sober *Reason*, and to those of the *Holy Scripture*; we shall find God represented to us after this Manner. (Nor need I offer much Proof for what is fully acknowledged, not only by all Christians, but by sober Heathens.)

In the first place then; God is eternal, without Beginning or Ending; the first and original Cause of all Things. And indeed if there were not such an eternal Cause of all other Things, it would have been absolutely impossible that any Thing should ever have been produced into Being. *Before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the Earth and the World; even from Everlasting to Everlasting thou art God. Psal. xc. 2. In the Beginning God created*

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the Heaven and the Earth, Gen. i. 1. By him were all Things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible— All Things were created by him and for him ; and he is before all Things, and by him all Things consist, Col. i. 16.

Secondly, *God is a Spirit, John iv. 24. He hath not Flesh and Bones (Luke xxiv. 39.)* or bodily Members, as we poor Mortals have : And consequently he is *invisible* to mortal Eyes, *1 Tim. vi. 16.* and not to be perceived by any of our bodily Senses. *Lo he goeth by me and I see him not ; he passeth on also, but I perceive him not, Job ix. 11. Behold I go forward, but he is not there ; and backward, but I cannot perceive him : On the left Hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him : He hideth himself on the right Hand that I cannot see him : But he knoweth the Way that I take, Job xxiii. 8, &c.* And for this Reason it is both impossible and unlawful to represent God by any bodily Image (which indeed is to misrepresent him) and much more unlawful to worship any such Image. The Soul of Man indeed, which is a *Spiritual Being*, is an Image of God, tho' a very faint one : But a *bodily Image* of him cannot possibly be made. *Take good heed unto yourselves (for ye saw no Manner of Similitude on the Day that the Lord spake to you in Horeb, out of the midst of the Fire) lest ye corrupt yourselves, and*

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make you a graven Image; the Similitude of any Figure, says Moses, Deut. iv. 15. And we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto Gold, or Silver, or Stone graven by Art and Man's Device; says St. Paul, Acts xvii. 29.

In *Holy Scripture* indeed we sometimes meet with such Expressions as these, *The Eyes of the Lord, and the Arm of the Lord*, and the like: But all Men know that such Expressions are ever to be understood in a metaphorical or spiritual, and not in a bodily Sense; *The Arm of the Lord* signifying no more but his Power, and *the Eyes of the Lord* his Knowledge, or watchful Providence.

Visible Signs and Tokens of God's immediate Presence have sometimes also been exhibited to the Eyes of Men. Thus (to omit other Instances) the *Fire* that appeared to *Moses* in the *Bush* was a Sign to him that God was there present in an extraordinary Manner, *Exod. iii. 2.* But God himself is invisible. *No Man hath seen God at any time, John i. 18.*

Thirdly, God who created the Universe, and every Thing in it, is every where present, and knows all Things. *Can any hide himself in secret Places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: Do not I fill Heaven and Earth? saith the Lord, Jer. xxiii. 24. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I*
ascend

ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: If I make my Bed in Hell, thou art there. If I take the Wings of the Morning and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the Darknes shall cover me; even the Night shall be Light about me: Yea, the Darknes hideth not from thee, but the Night shineth as the Day. The Darknes and the Light are both alike to thee, Psal. cxxxix. 7, &c. Neither is there any Creature that is not manifest in his Sight: But all Things are naked and open unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do, Heb. iv. 13.

Fourthly, As God's Knowledge is infinite so is his Power also: Whereby he is able to do every thing which in itself is any way possible to be done. Of which his having created this stupendous Fabrick of the whole Universe and all the Creatures therein, in that most beautiful and useful Order wherein we behold them, is an Evidence beyond all Contradiction. And by this infinite Knowledge and Almighty Power he not only created the whole World, but also continually directs and governs it by a most wise and unerring Providence. With God all Things are possible, Matt. xix. 26. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in Heaven and in Earth, in the Seas, and in all deep Places, Psal. cxxxv. 6. It is by God that all Things consist, and preserve their very Being,

ing, Col. i. 17. *He upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Power*, Heb. i. 3. *In him (that is to say, by him) we live, move, and have our Being*, Acts xvii. 28. When God had created the World, and made Man to be the Lord of this Part of it; he did not forsake or neglect the Work which he had done; but is the constant Preserver and Upholder of it. *It is he that maketh his Sun to shine on the Evil and on the Good; and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust*, Matt. v. 45. *The Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of Men*, Dan. iv. 32. and governs the World by so particular a Providence, that *a Sparrow doth not fall to the Ground without our heavenly Father; but the very Hairs of our Head are all numbered*, Matt. x. 29, 30. Neither is it to be thought that the creating or governing the World, or ten Millions of Worlds, (if there were so many) could be any Labour or Trouble to infinite Knowledge joined with infinite Power. Let God but *speak* and the Thing is done: Let him but *command* and it stands fast, Psal. xxxiii. 9. Nor is it any just Objection against God's Providence, that the good and evil Things of this World do not appear, in this Life, to be impartially distributed. A King may govern his Dominions with most wise Counsels, altho' the Bulk of his Subjects are often not made acquainted with the Reason of his Conduct.

duct. We are here on the wrong Side of the Curtain: But when the Scene of the next Life comes to be opened to us, we shall soon be convinced of the Justice and Equity of all God's Proceedings; and that the Righteous will then have no Cause to complain of the Hardships which they have here endured; nor the Wicked to boast of the Prosperity which for a few Moments they have enjoyed. For which Reason we ought, for the present, to *possess our Souls in Patience*, as our blessed Lord commands, *Luke xxi. 19.*

Fifthly, God is most holy, just, and true: There being not the least shadow of a Reason why he should be otherwise. *The Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works*, Psal. cxlv. 17. *Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and canst not look upon Iniquity*, that is to say, with Approbation, *Hab. i. 13.* *The Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth Covenant and Mercy with them that love him*, Deut. vii. 9. *It is impossible for God to lye*, Heb. vi. 18. *And the way of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord: But he loveth him that followeth after Righteousness*, Prov. xv. 9.

Sixthly, God is most merciful and gracious in pardoning and rewarding all those who truly and sincerely repent of their Sins, and become obedient to his holy Laws; but

strict and severe in punishing all such as continue in their Disobedience to him.

It is a pernicious Error that too many are apt to entertain of God's *Mercy*, as if it almost wholly superseded his *Justice*; and that, however wickedly a Man has lived, yet as soon as he becomes sorrowful for his Sins, and begs the Forgiveness of them, his Pardon is immediately sealed in Heaven: And this makes them with so much Assurance rely upon what is commonly, but very improperly, called a *Death-Bed Repentance*. Whereas God has no where promised to forgive Sins, but upon the Condition of Obedience; nor can there be any such thing as true Repentance without Reformation and Amendment of Life. *When the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness, that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive, Ezek. xviii. 27. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; cease to do Evil, learn to do well; seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow, says God. Then it follows, tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow, tho' they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool, Isa. i. 16, 27, 18. And we must bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance, Matt. iii. 8. Or else we have no Ground to hope for Acceptance with God. The Lord God is merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant*

abundant in Goodness and Truth, forgiving Iniquity and Transgression and Sin : But he will by no means clear the Guilty, Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked : But then it is not enough for the wicked Man to be sorrowful for his Sins ; which he cannot avoid being, when he finds they have brought him to the Brink of Hell ; but he must also *turn from his Way*, if he expects to live, Ezek. xxxiii.

11. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life, Joh. iii. 16.* Which is a most stupendous Instance of God's Mercy to us. But at the same time, the whole Tenor of the *Holy Scripture* assures us that if our *Belief* in God and in Christ does not bring us to a holy Life, it will turn to no Account to us, except to increase our Condemnation: For *Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead, being alone, Jam. ii. 17.* Where there is a *patient Continuance in Well-doing*, God of his Mercy hath promised *Glory, Honour, Immortality, and eternal Life.* But unto them that are contentions, and do not obey the Truth, but obey *Unrighteousness*, his Justice has denounced *Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil, Rom. ii. 7, 8, 9.* And tho' the Danger of eternal Damnation, when it draws near, may well make such a Man sorrowful

rowful for his evil Life ; yet no *Sorrow* will free him from this dreadful Sentence, except it *worketh Repentance*, which, I have shewn you, cannot be without Amendment and Reformation of Life. For that *Sorrow* alone is true *Godly Sorrow*, as St. Paul informs us, 2 Cor. vii. 10. *Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : For whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption : But he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting*, Gal. vi. 7, 8.

Much more might be said concerning these Attributes of God, and many Particulars added to these general Considerations ; but all that we can possibly say or think of him, may at once be comprehended in this, that he is a Being of the most absolute and infinite Perfection. *Our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, Mat. v. 48. *His Way is perfect*, Psal. xviii. 30. *His Law is perfect*, Psal. xix. 7. *His Will is perfect*, Rom. xii. 2. *His Work is perfect*, Deut. xxxii. 4. Whatever is truly great or good is all, in an infinite manner, contained in the Divine Nature ; so that God is most perfectly happy in himself : Nor can we or all the Creatures in the World make the least Addition to his Happiness, or diminish ought from it.

All that I have hitherto said of God, is not only the Belief of those who profess
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Christianity; but, for the Substance of it, has always been acknowledged by the wisest and soberest Men of all Perswasions, even among the Heathens. Diverse Reasons might be given, and many more Passages of Holy Scripture brought for the Proof of each Point: But it is needless to multiply Texts or Arguments for the Confirmation of those Things that are already agreed upon. All Men, who have ever thought soberly of God, have acknowledged, with *St. Paul*, that *the invisible Things of him from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen* (or made known) *being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead*, Rom. i. 20. And that all manner of Excellency and Perfection, without the least Defect or Decay, do most eminently and eternally reside in the supreme Deity.

Natural Reason, as well as *Holy Scripture*, assures us, that there is but one God; and that all Perfection belongs to him alone. But there is one Thing concerning God, which *Reason* could never have discovered, and is only made known unto us by *supernatural Revelation*. For which Reason it is in vain to attempt to dive farther into it than as it is thus *revealed*: And this is, that in the Unity of the Divine Nature there are three Persons: *There are three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word* (or *the Son*,

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as he is usually called) *and the Holy Ghost: And these Three are one*, 1 Joh. v. 7. In this *Name* all Men, who are admitted into the Church of *Christ*, are commanded to be *Baptized*, Mat. xxviii. 19. And thereby dedicated to the Holy Trinity. In the same Name St. *Paul* blesses the Church; *The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all*, says he, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. And that both the Name and incommunicable Attributes of God are, in holy Scripture, ascribed to *the Son*, and to *the Holy Ghost*, is a Thing most manifest.

These then are the Thoughts, which upon all Occasions we ought to have of God. Let us take them together in one View, that they may make the deeper and stronger Impression upon our Minds. God is the eternal and first Cause of all Things. He is a pure Spirit, every where present, and knows all Things; infinitely wise and powerful, the Creator and Governor of the whole Universe, by whom all Things consist, and are preserved: Most holy, just, and true: Merciful and gracious to all that truly love and serve him; and strict and severe to those that continue to slight and disobey him. All Perfection is in him: And in the Unity of the Divine Nature, there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

I proceed therefore to the third Thing proposed, which was to shew that these Thoughts, duly imprinted on our Minds, will most certainly have a good Influence upon us, in order to bring us to lead our whole Lives according to the Rules of true Virtue and Piety. And this will soon appear to be so very plain, that I need only offer a few Considerations to that Purpose, without much Enlargement upon them.

In the first Place then, these Thoughts, if duly imprinted upon our Minds, will constantly represent God to us as infinitely the greatest, most glorious and perfect of all Beings; and consequently as infinitely the most worthy Object of all the Love, Honour, Adoration, and Obedience that can possibly be paid to him. Which Consideration, if we dwell upon it, cannot but inflame our Hearts with an ardent Desire of doing every Thing whereby we may secure to ourselves his Favour and Protection.

Secondly, These Thoughts represent God as our greatest Benefactor, who has not only given us all the good Things which we enjoy in this Life; but also made us capable of eternal Happiness in the Life which is to come: And all this not for any Merit on our Part (who are frail sinful Creatures) but purely of his own Goodness and free Will: And this, if well considered, cannot but inspire us with the highest Degree of Love

Love and Thankfulness to him ; which we (poor Mortals) have no other way of shewing, but by a diligent Endeavour to do every thing that we know to be acceptable to him : And when we consider that stupendous Instance of his Love to us (which I have once already mentioned, and cannot be too often thought on) in sending *his only begotten and beloved Son*, to take our Nature upon him, and to suffer such bitter Things for our sake, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life*, John iii. 16. What Love, what Gratitude, what Obedience can, on our part, be great enough, in return for such superabundant Mercy ?

Thirdly, These Thoughts represent God as our supreme Lord and Judge ; a gracious *Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, Heb. xi. 6. and no less than a *consuming Fire*, Heb. xii. 29. to those who persist in their Disobedience to him. Of which, if a Man often thinks, what greater Encouragement can he have to a holy Life, than the certain Expectation of an eternal Reward from such a *faithful Hand* ? Heb. x. 23. And what can more deter him from Wickedness than the Dread of *everlasting Punishment*, Matt. xxv. 40. denounced against impenitent Sinners by him *that cannot Lye* ? Tit. i. 2. Hope and Fear are said to be the Springs of all our Actions : And what can more excite them both in us, than the Promises

mises and Threatnings of God himself? *God is not a Man, that he should lye, neither the Son of Man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* Numb. xxiii.

19. This Consideration ought most powerfully to stir us all up, first, to learn what our Duty is; and then with Diligence to put it in Practice.

Fourthly, These Thoughts represent God to us as being infinitely *Wise*. And from a right Apprehension of his *Wisdom*, we may plainly gather, that since he has made us *rational Creatures*, he will require nothing from us, but what is agreeable to that *Reason*, which he has implanted, as the superior Faculty to preside within us. A *reasonable Service* (as St. Paul terms it, *Rom. xii. 1.*) is what God expects from us. Wherever God's Command appears, altho' we know not the Reason of it, yet his Authority alone is a sufficient Reason to oblige Man to Obedience. And therefore, as long as the Law of *Moses* was in Force, the People of *Israel* (to whom alone that Law was given) were under an Obligation to observe, not only the moral, but also the ceremonial and judicial Parts of it. But that universal Obedience, which God always did and does require from Mankind, is to the *moral Law*, which is the *Law of Reason*: Save only that he has been pleased to enjoin two or three *positive*

Institutions even under the Gospel. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* (Micah vi. 8.) is the Voice of the Prophet. *Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these Things,* (Phil. iv. 8.) And again, *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men; teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works,* (Tit. ii. 11, &c.) is the Voice of the Apostle. And *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth,* (John iv. 24.) is the Voice of Christ himself: To which many more Passages of the like Purport might be added both from the *Old and New Testament.*

And here, as we value our precious and immortal Souls, we must take great Care to avoid that pernicious Error of flattering ourselves

selves that we may please God by a few outward Performances, altho' we neither have that inward Frame and Temper of Mind, nor are zealous in the Performance of a great Part of that Duty, which he requires.

The Hypocrites of old (as we find them at large described in several Places of the *four Gospels*) affected to be very exact in the external Part of many Things which God had commanded : Such as Fasting, Praying, giving of Alms, paying of Tithes, and the like. But they loved the Praise of Men, they were envious, spiteful, and covetous ; and *omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith*, Matt. xxiii. 23. And what Good they seemed to do, did not proceed from a pure and upright Heart. For which Reason they are often reproached and condemned by our blessed Saviour. This Hypocrisy is with Indignation condemned in many Places of the Holy Scripture; and numberless are the Passages which plainly tell us that all our Actions ought to proceed from a pure, clean, and upright Heart. He alone is *a good Man, who out of the good Treasure of the Heart bringeth forth good Things*, Matt. xii. 35. This is that *reasonable Service*, that *spiritual Worship*, which I have told you God requires from us all, whom he has made *rational Creatures* ; and without which it is in vain to hope for Acceptance with him.

But

But much more dangerous is the Error of those Men who place the chief Part of their Piety and Religion in such outward Performances, as are so far from being commanded by God, that they are in themselves absurd and irrational. Such as their being present at a Worship of which they understand not one Word: Their giving divine Worship to a consecrated Wafer which (even according to their own Principles) they cannot be sure, with the Certainty of Faith, is transubstantiated, as they call it: Their praying to the Saints departed, although they are not sure that they can help them, or even hear their Prayers, or indeed that many of them are really Saints, or (some of them) ever had a Being: Their worshipping of Images and Relicks; tho' they cannot be sure that they are the Relicks of any real Saint: Their going Pilgrimages, and thereby neglecting their honest Business: Their confessing all their Sins to a Priest, and performing the Penance which he enjoins them: Their abstaining from Flesh upon certain Days: Their frequent crossing themselves and beating their Breasts: Their numbering (or rather indeed mumbling) their Prayers upon a String of Beads: With other Follies too long to be reckoned up. Nothing like a Command of God appears for any of these Things. How then can they think that he will be pleased with them? And when

when these poor deluded Souls expect that for such Things as these it shall be said unto them, *Well done thou good and faithful Servant,* (Matt. xxv. 21.) Is it not probable, indeed is it not certain, that God will say unto them, *Who hath required this at your Hand?* Isai. i. 12. Those Guides have certainly very much to answer for, who lead their People astray into such Paths as these.

Fifthly, It is a great Encouragement to many Men to be wicked, when they think they can conceal their Sins from the Knowledge of the World. *No Eye shall see me,* says the wicked Man, *and disguiseth his Face,* Job xxiv. 15. But if we duly consider that God is every where present, and knows all Things, even the very Thoughts of our Hearts; what Folly is it for such a Man to please himself that his Wickedness is a Secret to all other Men like himself! *Understand, ye Brutish among the People; and, ye Fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the Ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the Eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the Heathen, shall not be corrected? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall not he know?* Psal. xciv. 8. &c. This Consideration, wherever it sinks deep into the Mind of a Man, cannot but have a great Force towards putting him upon such a serious and thorough Repentance and Reformation of his Life, as that God may *hide his Face from his Sins, and blot out*

all his Iniquities, Psal. li. 9. so as that at the last great Day, *when God shall judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ according to the Gospel*, (Rom. i. 16.) nothing may appear against him, to work his Shame or Confusion.

Sixthly, Flesh and Blood, before it comes to be thoroughly mortified and subdued, finds great Difficulty in so curbing and overcoming its Lusts, Passions, and evil Inclinations, as to *cast down Imaginations, and every high Thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. x. 5. And yet all this must most heartily be endeavour-
ed, if we resolve, with St. Paul, to *press towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Jesus Christ*, Phil. iii. 14. But when our natural Propensities, and much more if any vicious Habits, have got strong footing in us ; so great a Change as this is hardly to be wrought on a sudden. *For*, as long as we are in the Body, *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit*, Gal. v. 17. Our Passions and worldly Affections will sometimes stir within us, and thereby retard us in our Christian Course. But altho' it is difficult to complete this Work within our selves ; yet, with God's Assistance, it is not impossible. *For with God all Things are possible* ; Matt. xix 26. And the Necessity of it, in order to our eternal Salvation, ought never to let

us rest until we have effected it. Now there is nothing, which on our Part can be done, that is more effectual toward the working of this good Work in us, than thus to have *God in all our Thoughts*, as I have set the Matter forth ; which, if we are not worse than Madmen, cannot but bring us to love and fear him in the highest Degree, and this Love and Fear to serve and obey him with the greatest Sincerity and Diligence ; despising all Difficulties that occur in the Way of such Service ; according to the Examples set before us in the *Holy Scripture*. Thus *Moses chose rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season — for he had Respect unto the Recompence of the Reward*, Heb. xi. 25, 26. Thus the primitive Christians gloried in Tribulation, knowing that *Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope, and Hope maketh not ashamed*, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. And our blessed Saviour is set forth as an Example to us that we should *run with Patience the Race that is set before us : Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith : Who for the Joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the Shame*, Heb. xii. 1. 2. To which we may add a great many other Instances from *Holy Scripture*, and particularly all those that are mentioned in the eleventh Chapter of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. A wellgrounded Hope
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of a very great Reward, on the one Hand, and the certain Expectation of a dreadful Punishment on the other, together with an ardent Love for the Person who lays his Commands upon us, are the most powerful Motives to make us overcome all Difficulties that lie in the Way of our Obedience. Nor is there any more effectual Way, through God's Grace, to work ourselves up to all this, than constantly to have our Thoughts fixed upon God and his several Attributes. And if a Man thus constantly fixes his Thoughts, it is the ready Way, not only to qualify him for the Joys of Heaven, but also to give him, even in this Life, an Antepast of them; which is the most perfect State a Man can here arrive at.

I think I have now shewn that the Thoughts of God, if duly imprinted on our Minds, cannot but have a very good Influence upon us, in order to bring us to lead our whole Lives according to the Rules of true Virtue and Piety. But this will yet more fully appear by mentioning

Some particular Occasion, on which we ought more especially to call God into our Thoughts, and shewing the great Use of doing so, in order to preserve and improve our Virtue; which was the fourth Thing proposed to be done.

In this World we live in the midst of Snares and Temptations, with which we are
 conti-

continually furrounded. If therefore we have any just Regard to our eternal Salvation, it is our Duty to *walk circumspectly*; as the Apostle directs, *Eph. v. 15.* that we may neither be surprized by the Suddenness of Temptations, nor over-born by the Strength of them. And what can possibly make us more *circumspect* in all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, than constantly to have God in our Thoughts, and always to remember that he is ever present with us? The Presence even of a sober and grave Man is often a great Restraint upon us, to keep us from doing Things that are improper or unbecoming: And how much more ought the Presence of the great God (if we would but think upon it) to have the like Effect upon us, with regard to all manner of Sin and Wickedness? Whilst we are young, healthy and strong, and thereby more liable to be tempted to many Sins, there is need of the greatest *Circumspection* to keep us in the right Way. And therefore (says wise King Solomon) *Remember thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth*, Eccl. xii. 1. Have him constantly in thy Thoughts, and this will be both a Restraint and a Guide to thee. And if we have hitherto neglected to do this as we ought to have done; let us lose no more Time, but immediately set about it. *Evening and Morning and at Noon will I pray*, says the Holy Psalmist, Psal. lv. 17.

And

And again, *seven times a Day do I praise thee*, Psal. cxix. 164. And again, *I have set the Lord alway before me, because he is at my right Hand*, Psal. xvi. 8. Let us habituate ourselves to think of God, and often to lift up our Hearts to him; sometimes in our more solemn Prayers and Devotions, and often in pious though short Ejaculations. *In all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy Paths*, Prov. iii. 6. We read of *Enoch*, that he *walked with God*, Gen. v. 24. Wherever he went, or whatever he did, he took God for his constant Companion: And for this God took him to himself; as he will do us all, when we pass out of this Life, if we tread in the Steps of that holy Man.

Thus it appears that we ought, all of us, very often, and indeed almost constantly, to think of God. But there are some certain Seasons and Occasions, in which we ought, in a more solemn and devout Manner, to call him into our Remembrance. I shall mention five of them.

First, Whenever we undertake any Business of Consequence.

Secondly, In the time of Danger or Distress.

Thirdly, When we have received any remarkable Deliverance.

Fourthly, In the time of settled Health and Prosperity. I join these two together, because

cause without Health no Condition of Life can be looked upon as prosperous.

Fifthly, Whenever we are about to address ourselves to Prayer or Devotion.

Touching the first of these; both Reason and holy Scripture assure us, that no Success is to be expected in any Business, if God, who (as I have shewn you) governs all things by a most particular Providence, does not think fit to bless and prosper it. *Except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it: Except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the Bread of Sorrows or Carefulness*, Psal. cxxvii. 1, 2. When therefore thou undertakest any Business of Consequence look up to God, and seriously consider whether the Business itself be honest and acceptable to him; and then whether thou followest it in an honest and righteous Way, without Fraud or any unlawful Artifice: And if, upon a strict Inquiry, thy Conscience gives thee Assurance in both these Points; then thou may'st with Confidence beg God's Blessing upon it. But still remember that in this World, which is a Place of Tryal, God often suffers even a righteous Cause to be oppressed: For the exercising of our Patience, and more effectually to wean

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us from the Love of earthly Things. And therefore if, after all-thy Prayers and Endeavours, thou dost not meet with Success, it is thy Duty not to murmur or repine, but with Patience and Resignation to bear whatever he in his Providence shall think fit to lay upon thee.

Of thus thinking of God, and calling upon him, whenever we engage in any honest Business, I omit the Instances of *David*, *Solomon*, and other great Men; and shall only mention one, which is fit for our constant and daily Imitation: And that is of *Abraham's Servant*; who, when he was employed to go and seek a Wife for his Master's Son *Isaac*, would not enter upon an Affair of such Importance, until he had offered up his Prayer in these Words: *O Lord God of my Master Abraham, I pray ye send me good Speed this Day, and shew Kindness unto my Master Abraham*: With more that follows, *Gen. xxiv. 12*. The whole Story is beautiful; and this Example of the Servant, very fit for our Imitation, whenever we undertake any Thing of Moment, either for ourselves or for another.

To eat and drink for the Preservation of Life and Health, is certainly a Business of great Consequence to us: A single Meal of unwholesome Food, taken to Excess, having often been the Occasion of Death or
Sickness

Sickness. And therefore, as often as we eat or drink, it is highly proper for us to lift up our Thoughts to God ; to praise him for his Bounty, in giving us his Creatures to sustain us, and to pray to him to bless our Nourishment to us, and to keep us from the Sins of Gluttony and Intemperance. And if this were always done with that Seriousness that it ought to be ; it would be a great Restraint from that abominable Sin of *Drunkenness*, of which so many are often guilty.

Secondly, In all Times of Danger or Distress, such as publick or private Calamities, Trouble of Mind or Conscience, Sickness, the Apprehension of Death, or whatever else is grievous or terrible to human Nature, we ought, with more than ordinary Earnestness and Ardour, to think of God, and flee unto him for Relief and Succour. *Call upon me in the Day of Trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*, says God, *Psal.* l. 15. Of which we have many Instances in the Holy Scripture, and particularly in the Book of *Psalms*.

But if God in his Wisdom shall at any Time think fit to continue us longer under any Calamity or Affliction, from which we desire and pray to be set free, (which very often is the Case) it is our Duty willingly to submit our selves to the Hand of his Providence, and to be *patient in Tribulation*,
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yet continuing instant in Prayer, Rom. xii. 12. To which we have many Exhortations and many Examples of it in Holy Scripture, *Ye have heard of the Patience of Job, Jam. v. 11.* And what greater Pattern of Patience could there be than our blessed Saviour himself, whom we are bound in all Things, as far as we can, to imitate.

If we consider the Matter seriously, we are scarcely ever in greater Danger, than when we fall into the Company of wicked Men, whose prophane and ungodly Discourse and Behaviour has commonly a bewitching Influence upon those who associate with them. That *evil Communications corrupt good Manners*, was the Observation not only of *St. Paul, 1. Cor. xv. 33.* but even of some of the *Heathens* themselves; and is every Day too much verified in the World. If then, in the Course of the World, you cannot wholly avoid such evil Company (which certainly would be the safest Way) at least, when thou hast the Misfortune to be among them, stand upon thy Guard, and call God to thy Assistance, that thou mayest not be led astray by them. They perhaps will *speak evil of you, because you run not with them to the same Excess of Riot, 1 Pet. iv. 4.* But remember that *for all these things God will bring both them and thee into Judgment, Eccl. xi. 9.* and call to Mind the Words of our blessed Saviour: *Whoever shall be ashamed*

ashamed of me, and of my Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation; of him also shalt the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels, Mark viii. 38.

Thirdly, When at any time we have received any remarkable Deliverance from Danger or Distress; whatever the second Causes of it may have been, we must not fail to look up to God who is the First Cause of every Thing that is good, and *worketh all things after the Counsel of his own Will*, Eph. i. 11. *Who* (as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. i. 10.) *delivered us from so great a Death, and doth deliver: In whom also we trust that he will yet deliver us:* And to lift up our Hearts in Praises and Thanksgiving for the same. Of which there are so many Instances and Examples in Holy Scripture, that I need not stand to mention them: Nor indeed can any Man have the least Sense of Religion, but he must acknowledge this to be his Duty.

When we are in Danger or Distress; or as long as the Thoughts of any remarkable Deliverance remain fresh in our Memory, so long we commonly have some Inclination to think of God, and to lift up our Hearts to him in Prayer for what we want, or in Praise for the Good we have received: But when for some Time we have been in a settled State of Prosperity, we are too apt to forget God our Saviour,

(Pfal. cvi. 21.) and the Things which he has done for us. Then Men betake themselves wholly to Pleasure and Rejoicing, not in God, but in the good and safe Condition wherein they take themselves to be. *The Harp and the Viol, the Tabret and Pipe and Wine are in their Feasts; but they regard not the Work of the Lord, neither consider the Operation of his Hands*, Isai. v. 12. And therefore to awaken them out of this fatal Lethargy, it is necessary to put them in mind,

Fourthly, That in the Time of our most confirmed Health and Prosperity, there is as much Reason why we should have God constantly in our Thoughts, as in that of Sickness or Adversity, or at any other Time whatsoever.

How and after what Manner we ought always to think of God, I have already endeavoured to shew : But there are four Things relating to him, which, in Time of Health and Prosperity, we ought to have very particularly in our Minds.

First, That all the Blessings, which we enjoy, are entirely owing to God's Goodness and Providence.

Secondly, That they are, all of them, God's own Property, and we no more but the Stewards and Managers of them.

Thirdly, That we all live in a constant and continual Dependance upon God.

And *Fourthly*, That he will bring us all into Judgment for our Conduct and Management.

All

All this most manifestly follows from what has been already said. But because it is at no Time more necessary to awaken Men into the Thoughts of God, than in that of their great Prosperity ; it will be very proper, upon this Occasion, to endeavour to inculcate these great and most important Truths into their Minds. If I should attempt to say all that might be said upon them, both from Reason and holy Scripture, I might well fill a Volume: And therefore I shall only say so much upon each of them, as may give every sober Man Ground for farther Enlargement.

First then, In the Time of Health and Prosperity, let us constantly remember that all the Blessings, which we enjoy, are entirely owing to God's Goodness and Providence. Which it is a most dangerous Thing to be forgetful of. Who gave thee that Health of Body which thou enjoyest ? Was it not God, who formed and fashioned thee in thy Mother's Womb ; *whose Eyes did see thy Substance yet being imperfect, and in whose Book all thy Members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them ?* Psal. cxxxix. 16. Who gave thee those Riches, whereby thou may'st make thy Life easy and comfortable, if it be not thy own Fault ? Are not they all owing to God's good Providence ? Was it not he that *gave thee*, or it may be to some of thy Ancestors, *Power to get Wealth ;*

Deut. xviii 18. If he had given thee a sickly Constitution, and placed thee in a State of Want and Poverty; it would have been thy Duty to have born it all with Patience, and to have waited for thy Reward in the next Life. But since he has been pleased to make thee, more than many others, an Object of his Favour even in this World, oughtest thou not with Thankfulness often to look up to that bountiful Hand, from whence thou hast received all these good Things? Or *do'st thou thus requite the Lord, O foolish Man and unwise? Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath not he made thee and established thee?* Deut. xxxii. 6.

Secondly, In the Time of Health and Prosperity, we ought always to remember that all the Blessings, and good Things which we enjoy, are God's own Property; and that we are no more than the Stewards and Managers of them. God indeed has graciously allowed us the *Use* of them, or of a great Part of them: But the absolute *Property* in and of them he keeps to himself: And if at any Time he thinks fit to deprive us of them; he does us no Manner of Wrong. The *Nobleman* in the Parable, (*Luke* xix. 12.) put his Money into the Hands of *his Servants*, to deal and traffick with it: And out of it must be supposed to allow them a proper Maintenance: But still *the Money* was
his

his own, v. 23. and not theirs. God gives
 unto *Jerusalem* many good Things, *to cover*
her Nakedness, Hof. ii. 9. that is to say,
 to supply her Wants and Necessities: But
 yet he reserves to himself the Property in
 them all, together with full Power to de-
 prive her of them, whenever she displeases him.
Therefore (says he) will I return and take a-
way my Corn—and my Wine—and will re-
cover my Wool and my Flax. Since then we
 are not *Proprietors*, but only *Stewards* to our
 heavenly Lord of all that we possess; and
the Lord of the Servants will one Day most
 certainly *reckon with them*; Matt. xxv. 19.
 And how soon this *Reckoning* will be, he
 only knows: Should not this Consideration
 make us constantly careful so to manage the
 Things committed to our Trust, as that we
 may give an Account of our Stewardship
 with Joy and not with Grief? What exact
 Proportion of his Wealth each Man is ob-
 liged to set apart for the Uses of Piety or
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 cumstances of particular Men and their Fa-
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 these Duties being so very various. But St.
Paul gives a Charge to them that are rich in
this World — that they do good, that they be
rich in good Works, ready to distribute, wil-
ling to communicate, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. If
 the Steward of thy temporal Estate, instead
 of

of applying Part of thy Goods and Money according to thy own exprefs Direction, ſhould convert them, or any Part of them, to his own private Pleaſure or Profit ; wouldſt thou paſs ſuch an Article in his Accounts ? and, after ſuch a *Charge* as this given to all *rich Men*, and all that, to the ſame Purpoſe, is ſaid in holy Scripture ; can any ſuch Man think that *his* Account will be paſſed with God, with ſo many Articles in it for things unneceſſary, that well might have been ſpared, and ſo very few for feeding the Hungry, cloathing the Naked, or relieving the Widow or the Fatherleſs ; which God has ſo expreſſy commanded ?

Thirdly, In the time of Health and Proſperity, as well as in Sickneſs or Adverſity, we ought to keep it carefully in our Remembrance, that we all live in a conſtant and continual Dependance upon God. *By him all Things conſiſt*, and preſerve the Being which they have. *In him we live, and move, and have our Being*, (as I have already ſhewn you) and if he ſhould but for a Moment withdraw his Protection from us, we ſhould immediately ſink into Deſtruction, or even into nothing. Thus the *Holy Pſalmiſt*, ſpeaking of all the Creatures of the Univerſe, ſays, *Thou hideſt thy Face, they are troubled ; thou takeſt away their Breath, they die and return to their Duſt*, Pſal. civ. 29. As therefore it is the greateſt Comfort to a
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good Man to consider that he lives in the Favour, and under the constant Protection of such an Almighty Being, which may well support him in the time of the lowest Adversity; so to an impenitent Sinner, even in the height of his Prosperity, if he thinks of it at all, it cannot but be *a fearful thing to all into the Hands of the living God*, Heb. x. 31. *Who is a consuming Fire*, Heb. xii. 29. *And after he hath killed hath Power to cast into Hell*, Luke xii. 5. And if this will not bring us to a timely Repentance, and for the time to come restrain us from all Sorts of Wickedness, what is there else that can? But this same Consideration will be yet farther enforced by remembring,

Fourthly, That God will certainly bring us all into Judgment for our whole Conduct and Management. Worldly Prosperity is very apt to carry us away from our Duty: Nor can we lay a more effectual Restraint upon ourselves in such a Career, than often to think of God as our Judge, who will certainly *reward us if we diligently seek him*, Heb. xi. 6. And as certainly punish us, if we persist in our Disobedience to him. Youth, Health, Riches, Honour, or Power, whatever Protection they may afford us in this World, cannot shelter us from the avenging Hand of God. *Tho' Hand join in Hand, the Wicked shall not be unpunished*, Prov. xi. 21.

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Wherefore, *Rejoyce O young Man in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes ; All which, if it be tempered with Sobriety, may innocently be done : But, that we may not transgress the Rules of Virtue and Piety, it is added, But know thou that for all these Things God will bring thee into Judgment, Eccl. xi. 9. O ! that they were wise, that they understood this ; that they would consider their latter End ! Deut. xxxii. 29.*

Lastly, Whenever we are about to address ourselves in Prayer or Devotion to God, we ought before-hand to possess our Minds with an awful Apprehension of the divine Majesty. Keep thy Foot (that is to say, take Care of thy Steps) when thou goest to the House of God—Be not rash with thy Mouth, and let not thy Heart be hasty to utter any Thing before God : For God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth, says the wise Man, Eccl. v. 1, 2. Prayer and Devotion (whether public or private) is an Exercise of the greatest Concern to us : And therefore, when at any time we address ourselves to it, we ought well to consider what we are going to do, and to whom it is that we are about to offer our Supplications : Without which it is impossible for us to serve God acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear ; as it is always our Duty

Duty to do, *Heb. xii. 28.* And the like ought also to be done whenever we take an Oath; which is one sort of Worship to be paid to God alone. *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him; and shalt swear by his Name, Deut. vi. 13.*

In a Word, God is our eternal Creator, Governor, Preserver, Redeemer, Sanctifier, Lord, and Judge: *Of him, and through him, and to him are all Things: Rom. xi. 36.* From him alone we can hope for Comfort in this Life, and eternal Happiness in the Life which is to come. How stupid then and insensible must that Man be, who does not constantly think of him, and very often lift up his Heart to him, and more especially upon those Occasions that I have but now pointed out to you?

The Heathens, or *Gentiles*, having (as I have told you) perverted, and generally even abolished the right Notion of God in their Minds, are represented by *St. Paul* as being in a most miserable Condition, for this, amongst other Reasons, that they were *without God in the World: Gal. ii. 12.* And certainly most wretched must the Case of that Man be, who is *without God*, and has no Title to his Favour or Protection here, or to be happy with him hereafter. And if a Man seldom or never *thinks of God*, in that serious Manner that he ought to do; may it not truly be said
of

of him that he is *without God*, and consequently in the same miserable Condition that those Heathens of old were?

I conclude with the Words of Holy *David* spoken to his Son *Solomon*, which I think every Man ought to take as if they had been spoken to himself. *My Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind. For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.*

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be Honour and Glory, for ever and ever, Amen, 1 Tim. i. 17.

F I N I S.

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